THE STRUCTURE OF MUGHAL POLITY c: 1526-1575 A.D

ABSTRACT

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ABSTRACT

The present research work is a modest attempt to understand the evolution and nature of the Mughal political structure from 1526 to 1575, by the time most of its administrative and political structure had evolved. While on the one hand our work focuses on the impact of Central Asian institutions on Mughal politics and administration, it also on the other hand explores the role of *yasa* on the Central Asian political structure. *Siyasa* the Persian key word and terminology equivalent to the English 'Politics' was used to understand the evolution of the political structure both in Central Asia and later on under the Mughals. Therefore, the term *siyasa* needs to be given attention and is focused upon before drawing parallels between the political structure of the Mongol and Islam. The term *siyasa* in its early usage was not a technical term but a common word used for 'governance' and 'statecraft' a usage, which was not in conflict with *fiqh.* Most often it concentrated on the issues of Islamic governance and its legitimacy, its conflict or harmonisation with *fiqh* and *shariat.* From the mere and simplified meaning of 'management' it acquired new definitions and further additions were incorporated to it with the change in Islamic political structure. *Siyasa* by the thirteenth century, and even before that, concerned itself with three issues: legitimacy of the ruler or ruling house, the purpose of rule and the means to attain that purpose. The issue of legitimacy apparently formed the core of the politics (*siyasa*) during the medieval period; especially when in Islamic system there was no known fixed law of succession. The theorists were attempting to re-define the *siyasa* to harmonize it not only with the fast changing poltical situations but also with *shariat.*

The meaning and practical application of *siyasa* kept on evolving as the Islamic system itself evolved, as had been discussed in the introduction of the thesis. From the mere and simplified meaning of 'management' it acquired new definitions and further additions were incorporated to it with the change in Islamic political structure. It explores the processes through which Mughal political structure gradually evolved, securing a foothold in their South Asian dominions by 1575. The thesis also notes the influences in the evolutionary process, be it Islamic, Central Asian or Hindustani, and also revisits some of the essential concepts within the theoretical framework of political structure and its application and utility in sixteenth century Mughal South Asia. The Political Structure of Mughals has attracted scholarly attention from various perspectives, i.e., economic, political and military. The conscious attempts were made to trace the political structure under the Mughals of South Asia to the Central Asian structure of polity from where the Mughals traced their ancestry, both biological as well as imagined. The Central Asian constitutional system allegedly developed and implemented by Chinggis Khan known as *yasa* is even traced in the Mughal polity, surprisingly without noticing the evolution not only of *yasa* but also of the Mughal political structure itself which is also compared with that of Islam as it developed during the second half of the seventh century. Some scholars are of the view that Mughal political system lacked strong centralization and that was due to Turko-Mongol Tribal Structure basically guided by traditional rules and regulations particularly *Yasa-i Chinggisi* or the laws of Chinggis Khan, which could hardly permit the rise of an absolute and despotic monarchy.

However, scholarship has also tended to explore limitations of yasa and the growing importance of *shariat* (Islamic Laws) among the Central Asians especially after the death of Chinggis Khan and the advent of Islam. But then, this tendency to converge

and overlap paradigms had some obvious shortcomings, for both the tribal system and Islamic laws complimented each other in many aspects. In the Islamic society the highest political authority evolved in the office of *Khalifa* and in the Mongol to that of *Khaqan*. Yet there is continuing evidence, at least in contemporary works that both offices did not quite lose their rigor under the Mughals. Yet another important shortcoming in the study of Mughal political structure was to relate it to Central Asia, (whether to Chinggis Khan or to Timur's political system) without critical analyzing some of the terminologies and concepts used in those political systems.. Thus, the dispute among historians over some of the basic concepts such as *Yasa*, *Qurultai*, *Amir*, *Sultan*, *Padishah*, apart from the very word Mughal used for the dynasty of Babur in South Asia appears a misnomer. Naturally, studies done on Mughal polity without the kind of critique mentioned above achieve only teleological explanation of the Mughal political structure. While it is clear from various researches that the structure of Mughal polity definitely acquired prominent features as well as impetus from 1560 onwards, but it took at leas two full decades to fully develop.

Having already discussed the definitions, implications and evolution of the term and concept of *siyasa* with in Islamic political structure, Chapter One immediately concerns itself with the Central Asian constitutional system, popularly known as the *yasa* of Chinggis Khan, and its overlapping with the Islamic *siyasa*. Naturally then quite a bit of Mongolian political history also gets incorporated there, which eventually strengthen our argument further. An attempt is made in this section to sketch in somewhat broad strokes an important aspect of the Mongolian political or constitutional system based on and referred to as the 'Great *yasa*'. The two intervals of regency, i.e. after the death of Chinggis Khan and Ogedei saw a steep rise in the powers of the nobility and also witnessed rise in the power of the priestly class. A

precedent was thus set in motion, which only entitles every surviving member of the deceased 'sovereign' for sovereignty, but even a member of the ruling elites could also manufacture it. The principle of 'legitimacy' to rule acquired new meanings after the death of Chinggis Khan in the *siyasa.* It became a necessary obligation for a claimant to prove his 'legitimacy'. This was easier for a surviving male off-springs for they claimed their 'legitimacy' on the basis of 'royal blood' but it was not difficult either for any military genius, like Timur who could get the 'legitimacy' manufactured, as will be discussed in detail in the Chapter Two. This Chapter deals with the continuity of the Chinggisid traditions and modifications made by him according to the political development whereby issues like 'legitimacy' and 'justice' becomes prominent in medieval concept of *siyasa.* An attempt will be made in this chapter to explore this particular issue of 'legitimacy' vis-à-vis legacy, its conflict as well as harmonisation in defining the structure of medieval siyasa after the death of Chinggis Khan and also during the time of Timur. Throughout his career, Timur used and emphasized the 'legitimacy' of the Chaghtaid house and his followers too continued this tradition to identify themselves as upholder of Chinggisid order. At this time *shariat* became an important tool for legitimizing the rule of a ruler, and also for obtaining the vital support of the religious class, one might wonder what had become of that position of the legacy of Chinggis Khan that previously provided legitimacy to rule. Interestingly, we find that *yasa* was not totally in vogue. Our sources fortunately points towards a number of examples to prove that Chinggisid customs, including *yasa* were instrumental in providing 'legitimacy', in framing laws and in governance too.

Chapter Three confines itself to the reign of the first Mughal emperor Babur and his position in Central Asia. This chapter also notes the subtle changes in the process of

division of territories as assignments, the treaties with different rulers, and more importantly his firmness started to at least guide the 'Mughal concept of sovereignty' and shaped its political structure as well. His attempts to not only reform his administrative machinery but also to strengthen the position of the king was evident from various innovative methods he devised to claim a divine status, and division of nobility into three classes. By putting himself and his family in the first grade, Humayun appears to have sent the message across to his Central Asian nobility that he was much higher in status to all others including his relations. Through other metaphoric acts, like placing of veil on his phase, Humayun attempted to distance himself from the nobles who thought that the emperor was one amongst them. Humayun also claimed that the king was the shadow of God on the earth. Khwandmir calls him a personification of the spiritual and temporal sovereignty (*Jamai Sultanati Haqiqi wa Majazi*), and His Majesty the King, the Shadow of God (*Hazrat-i Padshah Zill-i-Ilahi*). Abul Fazl used the term 'Insan-i Kamil', or the Perfect Man for him who used to receive inspiration from God. As a matter of fact his It has been argued that all his innovations were a well-crafted strategy to make the position of the sovereign absolute, rather than meaningless innovations.

In fifth chapter we have discussed the position of the foster or the milk relatives of Emperor Akbar who remained largely unnoticed in the modern studies, because they treated almost as blood relatives. The politics of the time was clearly steered by the legitimacy paradigm instead of Central Asian notions of sovereignty. Akbar had to counter the ambitions of a number of nobles of different factions who created problems for him in the early years of his reign due to an easy access to the legitimacy. Therefore after dismissing Bariam Khan and taking the reigns of government in his hand he ignored the principle of the legitimacy both 'milk and

blood' by taking strong actions and introducing a set of administrative reforms. The tussle between different powerful groups of nobles to get the offices of *Wakil* and *Diwan* led Akbar to downgrade these offices by appointing people of non-*Turani* origin, ha and having absolutely no claim to these posts. This had two effects. Firstly, it conveyed the clear message to the haughty nobles from Central Asia that it is the prerogative of the sovereign to appoint anyone at any post. Secondly, by appointing persons having no claim to high post, Akbar in fact obliged them and believed that they should remain loyal to him. Placing of one generation nobility (eunuchs) and by recruiting more non-*turani* people in his nobility, Akbar in fact successfully challenged the nobles believing in Central Asian principles. Recruitment of Rajput women in harem and their male counterparts in his nobility, recruiting personal disciples, initializing *mansab* and *jagir* system were all aimed at controlling the powers of the nobility and elevating the position of the sovereign. To raise the position of sovereign to that of God or his shadow was not something that was totally unknown in medieval politics. The Mughal Emperor was now at the centre of administration. He was a core, with different sections of the subjects being the periphery. Whereas, on one hand, the emperor was accessible from the centre to all his subjects, on the other hand, he was standing in the centre, like a Sun whose radiance affected the whole empire. Sources of the period projected Akbar as divinely figure and introduced, rather re- introduced the ancient but strong concept of Persian Kingship. Both through practical actions as well as theoretical inputs from Abul Fazl, Akbar was able to revive the concept of strong monarchy that helped him not only to rule for nearly half a century but also to sustain that rule by his progeny for another century. In doing so his legitimacy to rule on the basis of his ancestry not only from Timur but also from Alanqua, the legendry mother of all the Mongols was

highlighted. If the ancestry is so high then the attempt to portray Akbar as a perfect man and a monarch (Insan-i adil) was obvious. There are few references whereby Akbar exhibited some connection with the yasa and these were no less than political strategies themselves. Instead what was attempted by him was to revert back to the Persian concept of sovereignty which provided, or deem to provide strong centralisation and absolute power to the king. He also made the Mughal 'sovereign' a centre of all political social and religious affairs and elevated his position among the nobility and the masses to that of the vice-regent of God. With these concepts, Akbar was able to carve out not only a large Kingdom but also a large following and the success of his strategies is well illustrated from his long and nearly unchallenged authority. Even after his death in 1605 his sons and grandsons continued to hold the Kingship for another century, thereby establishing a dynastic 'legitimacy'.

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Certificate

This is to certify that **Mrs. Gulrukh Khan** has completed her Ph.D. Thesis on the topic **"The Structure of Mughal Polity c: 1526 - 1575 A.D"** under my supervision. To the best of my knowledge, this is her original work which is suitable for submission for the award of Ph.D. degree.

Professor Afzal Husain
Supervisor

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(GULRUKH KHAN)

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INTRODUCTION

The structure of Mughal polity has attracted scholarly attention from various perspectives. These researches reveal the *longe duree* of a political structure under the Mughals from economic, political and military angles. Conscious or semi-conscious attempts have also tried to transmit the political structure under the Mughals of South Asia to the structure developed in Central Asia from where the former traced their ancestry, both biological as well as imagined. The Central Asian constitutional system allegedly developed and implemented by Chinggis Khan, and known as *yasa,* is even traced in the Mughal polity, surprisingly without noticing the evolution not only of *yasa* but also of the Mughal political structure itself. Yet another approach compares Mughal political structure with that of Islam as it developed during the second half of the seventh century.

The paradigms and methodology involved, however, have been bilinear, both converging and overlapping with each other. Thus, some scholars are of the view that Mughal political system lacked strong centralisation. It was Turko-Mongol tribal structure basically guided by traditional rules and regulations, particularly *Yasa-i Chinggisi* or laws of Chinggis Khan which could hardly permit the rise of an absolute and despotic monarchy. However, scholarship has also tended to explore limitations of *yasa* and the growing importance of *shariat* (Islamic Laws) among the Central Asians especially after the death of Chinggis Khan and the advent of Islam. But then, this tendency to converge and overlap paradigms had some obvious shortcomings, for both the tribal system and Islamic laws complimented each other in many aspects. The Central Asian and early Arab-

Islamic societies were both pastoral and nomadic, and shared many characteristics. Besides, up to the time of Prophet and also during the tenure of its first four Caliphs, political structures were but quasi-developed, a feature observed in Central Asia even under Chinggis Khan. Political thought developed only as the office of *Khalifa* in one society and of *Khaqan* in the other evolved. Yet there is continuing evidence, at least in contemporary works that both offices did not quite lose their rigour under the Mughals. Patricia Crone sharing somewhat the same comparison says that where Mongol statesman could accumulate earthly power, the Arabian Prophet tapped divine authority; and where the Mongol conquests were an explosion caused by the disintegration of a tribal society, the Arab explosion by contrast was caused by its fusion.[1]

The Mughals were Timurid successors in South Asia is a known fact. Trying to draw comparisons between a Central Asian politiy in the fifteenth century under Timur and distantly thirteenth century Central Asia under Chinggis with sixteenth century Mughal South Asia however, appears odd. Such studies apparently perceive some kind of 'model' or a 'structure' or a 'constitution', in the sense in which we use the word today and deliberately trace their continuity in South Asia.

Yet another important shortcoming in the study of Mughal political structure, and in attempts to relate it to Central Asia, whether to Chinggis Khan or to Timur's

[1] Patricia Crone, *Slaves on Horses: The Evolution of the Islamic Polity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980, p.25.

political system has been a lack of critical analysis of some of the terminologies and concepts, as well as there use by contemporary historians. Thus, the dispute among historians over some of the basic concepts such as *Yasa, Qurultai, Amir, Sultan, Padishah*, apart from the very word *Mughal* used for the dynasty of Babur in South Asia appears a misnomer. Naturally, studies done on Mughal polity without the kind of critique mentioned above achieve only teleological explanation of the Mughal political structure.

The present study, thus, is a modest attempt to understand the structure of Mughal polity between 1526 and 1575. It explores the processes through which Mughal political structure gradually evolved, securing a foothold in their South Asian dominions by 1575. In the process, the thesis also notes the influences in the evolutionary process, be it Islamic, Central Asian or Hindustani, and also revisits some of the essential concepts within the theoretical framework of political structure and its application and utility in sixteenth century Mughal South Asia.

Since the very word *siyasa*, the English translation of which is 'polity' or 'politics, forms the core of the present research, it would perhaps not be out of place to discuss its definition(s) in the evolution of Islamic political thought as well as practice. It is only then that we would be able to understand and analyse its nature, and implications in sixteenth century South Asia against the backdrop of Central Asian political practices from where the sixteenth century rulers of South Asia traced their descent.

Interrogating *Siyasa*: Evolution in Islamic Thought

In dealing with the nature and structure of polity as prescribed in Islamic canons (*Quran* and *shariat*) and various other juridical works (fiqh) as opposed to works on history whether commissioned (court histories) or written at one's own behest (unofficial histories), the term *siyasa* finds varying usage. Thus, its English translation at least in nineteenth century Arabic-Middle East was synonymous with 'politics' and 'political'. The problem gets even more compounded when these perso-Arabic historical as well as philosophical works deal with *siyasa* in the context of non-Muslim and early Muslim Central Asians in thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Moreover, the paucity of our knowledge of non-Muslim source material, Chinese for example, is limited. What we then have is an analysis of the political structure as left in Muslim sources alone. These historians or political theorists often created unnecessary, and often fantastical etymological links between Islamic canons (*shariat*), and Mongolian tribal law (*yasa*). The Mamluk historian, al-Maqrizi is one glaring example. He alleged that *siyasa* was a simply a corrupt form of *yasa*. This had far reaching implications. It diminished the importance of *yasa* and its infallibility. This will be discussed later. Furthermore, some Muslim historians exhibited great hostility towards Timur and Mongolian customs. Consequently, the need to understand the term *siyasa* acquires considerable significance. Therefore, before any attempt is made to draw parallels between Mongol and Islamic polities, the term *siyasa* needs to be given attention and is focussed upon.

The term *siyasa* has been known to Muslims from the days of their third Caliph, Umar b. al-Khattab and more authentically to the Abbasids where its early usage is primarily that of statecraft and the successful conduct of public affairs.[2] This usage is closely connected to its Biblical Hebrew roots *s-u-s* the meaning of which was 'horse', originally used in Bedouin society for the tending and training of beasts. Thus, we have the word *sais* which implied manager or trainer of horses and camels.[3] The eighth century account *Risala fil-Sahaba* of Ibn al-Mukaffa further extends the meaning of the term *siyasa* in Arabic, and thence in Persian and Turkish usage, that is of punishment, extending as far as capital punishment, which the ruler was bound to put into effect in order to preserve his authority.[4] Specifically, it implies punishment beyond the *hadd* penalties prescribed by Divine Law. Thus, Ibn al-Tiktaka in his celebrated work on state-craft and history, *al-Fakhri* writes:

> *Siyasa* is the chief resource of the king, on which he relies to prevent bloodshed, defend chastity, prevent evil, subjugate evildoers and forestall misdeeds which lead to sedition and disturbance.[5]

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[2] For details, see Muhammad Shaban, *The Abbasid Revolution*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970.

[3] J.H. Krammers & H.A.R Gibb, ed., *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1965, Vol.9, p.693.

[4] Fauji M. Najjar has sketched in detail the evolution of Islamic political thought. See for instance, Fauji M. Najjar, "On Political Science, Canonical Jurisprudence and Dialectical Theology", *Islamic Culture*, Vol. 34, 1960.

[5] Cited from Fauzi M Najjar, "Siyasa in Islamic Political Philosophy," in *Islamic Theology and Philosophy*, ed. M.E. Marmura, Albany: New York Press, 1984; For more extensive work, see Richard Walzer, *Al-Farabi on the Perfect State: Mabadi ara ahl al-madina al-fadila Abu Nasr al-Farabi,* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985.

The above interpretation and understanding of *siyasa* by Ibn al-Tiktaka stands true in the light of Persian and Ottoman Turkish tradition where in fact the word *siyasat-gah* meant "place of torture or execution."[6]

The greatest exponent of philosophical *siyasa* in medieval Islam, al-Farabi in his work *Kitab Ihsa al ulum* devoted an entire chapter *al-Ilm al-madani,* which has been translated as both political and civil science together with *fiqh* and scholastic theology (*ilm al-Kalam*).[7] al-Farabi notes that *al-ilm al-madani* makes enquiry into the kinds of actions and intentional ways of behaviour and natural dispositions and character and traits and the natures from which those actions and ways of behaviour derive. Given the link between al-Farabi's ideas and those of *al-Madina al-Fadila* and *al-Siyasa al-Madaniyya,* al-Farabi's definition becomes a useful philosophical substract for the whole concept of *siyasa.*[8]

Thus, in philosophers like al-Farabi, the intimate ways in which metaphysics and politics, or political science connect, have been many. Not only was there this intimate connect between philosophy and politics in al-Farabi's writings, some philosophers often gave *siyasa* more importance than *shariat,* though al-Ghazali and Ibn Taymiyya kept it subordinate. This shows that political life was susceptible to philosophical scrutiny and reason.

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[6] J.H. Krammers & H.A.R Gibb, ed., *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam,* Vol.9, p.693.

[7] For details, see Muhammad ibn Muhammad Farabi, *Kitab al-Siyasah al-Madaniyah,* Bayrut: al-Matbaah al-Kathulikiyah, 1964.

[8] See Walzer, *Al-Farabi on the Perfect State*; Also see Richard Netton, *Al-Farabi and His School,* London: Routledge, 1992.

The two Hanbali scholars in the first half of the fourteenth century, Ibn Taymiyya and his student Ibn Kayyim al-Djawziyya crystallised the law and procedures of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and the practical demands of governance (*siyasa*). Ibn Taymaiyya's view was that if Divine Law or *shariat* is duly observed there would be no conflict between *siyasa* and *fiqh*.[9] Earlier authorities had conceded that rulers had the need and right to deviate from *fiqh* for an effective *siyasa*, but Ibn Taymiyya claimed that such 'deviations' are unthinkable. He further explained that conflict arises either because *fiqh* is given too narrow interpretation neglecting the rich resources of the *shariat*, or because rulers disregard Divine Will and act unjustly (*siyasa zalima*).[10] Ibn Kayyim went a step further and claimed that true *siyasa* (*siyasa adila*) is but a part of *shariat* itself. However, IbnTaymiyya's views are just one formulation of the relationship between *fiqh* and *siyasa*, of the roles of rulers and '*ulema*' in upholding *shariat*.[11]

Now, if we merely trace various uses of the term *siyasa* we will find that in its early usage it was not a technical term, but a common word used for governance and statecraft, a use which betrayed little sense or no sense of conflict with *fiqh*. Early *shariat* legitimacy to rule, being grounded in the office of Caliph, his

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[9] See Serajul Haque, *Imam ibn Taimiya and his Project of Reforms*, Dhaka: Islamic Foundation Bangladesh, 1982; Zakaria bin Mat, *The Criteria of Islamic Civilisation: A Study of the Concept of (Bid'A) Innovation- a Case Study of Ibn Taimiya* (1263M-1328M), Birmingham: Birmingham University Press, 1987; Abdul Hakim al-Matraudi, *The Hanbali School of Law and Ibn Taimiyyah: Conflict or Conciliation*, London: Routledge, 2006.
[10] See Abdul Hakim al-Matraudi, *The Hanbali School of Law and Ibn Taimiyyah.*
[11] During Ibn Taimiya's time there was much conflict between the *shariat* and the Islamic practices, like the one practiced by the Sufis. See Qamaruddin Khan, *The Political Thought of Ibn Taymiyah* Muhammad B. 'Abd-Al-Wahhab (1703MN-1791M), Lahore: Islamic Book Foundation, 1983.

discretion on the *shariat* application was axiomatic. The first four Caliphs' exercised extreme broad legal authority, taking far reaching legal actions. Later, interpretive techniques of *fiqh* were different. Abu Yusuf in the eighth century often cedes to Caliph's discretion in *fiqh* matters without ever mentioning *siyasa.*

Thus, the term *siyasa* had different connotations in different periods of history in the evolution of Islamic polity. Most often it concentrated on the issues of Islamic governance and its legitimacy, its conflict or harmonisation with *fiqh* and *shariat.* It is perhaps not hard to comprehend the varying meanings of *siyasa* once we put into framework the development of the very nature of Islamic polity. The concern in the writings of medieval Islamic philosophers and historians about the whole issue of 'legitimacy' and *siyasa* comes to the forefront only if we attempt to understand the complexities in the development of Islamic polity itself, especially between eighth and tenth century and particularly how its institution of *Khalifat al-Rasulullah* gradually transformed into *Khalifat al-Allah.*

The institution of Caliphate was born when Prophet's closest friend and companion Abu Bakr in 632 became the new head of community (*Khalifat al-Rasulullah*). Prior to that, the Prophet had himself to care of the matters affecting the new community (*Ummah*).[12] Thus, Abu Bakr, being the new leader of the community was expected to exercise authority similarly. An oath of allegiance

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[12] See S.M. Imamuddin, *A Political History of the Muslims,* Dacca: Najmah, 1967-73, vol. 1&2.

(*baiyyah*) to Abu Bakr was taken from the community while Abu Bakr promised to govern 'justly' carrying out the objectives of the Prophet.

Two questions regarding the newly formed institution of caliphate immediately concern us here, for it is this institution which in due course of time developed elements of kingship that apparently was contrary to the teachings of Islam, and that ensued debate on the 'legitimacy' of *siyasa.* What procedure was to be adopted to choose a Caliph, and what powers were to be entrusted to them? These later became central questions.

Of the first four Caliphs (*Rashidun*), the difference in the procedure of the selection of the Caliph itself is noteworthy. Thus, Abu Bakr was proclaimed Caliph by the leading companions, while he designated Umar as his successor, which was later ratified by the *Ummah* by taking *baiyyah* (oath of allegiance). Later, Umar nominated six persons including Usman and Ali to choose the Caliph from among them. A discussion had to follow before the choice fell on Usman who then received *baiyyah.* Therefore, even in the appointment of the first three Caliph, three different methods were explored; all however, were only to be put into effect if ratified by the community, or by its most influential and closest members.

The second question is that of the powers exercised, or to be exercised by the new leaders of the community. This is even more problematical since these powers were not at that time defined in a precise way. One cannot base any conclusion on the meaning of the title *khalifa,* which suggesting at once the ideas of succession,

appointment and authority, remained somewhat vague, however. These powers seem essentially to have authorised the first three Caliphs to pursue actions for which the example was set by the Prophet himself and to put into practice the *Quranic* message, which itself was to be supplemented by the *sunna* instituted among the *ummah* in the lifetime of the Prophet, the ultimate aim being the spread of Islam.

By the time of third Caliph Usman, major political developments had taken place giving rise to new problems. How these problems were remedied is again problematical as will be discussed. The expansionist forces of the Caliphs were making inroads far outside the Arabian Peninsula. By 644, Iran's long-reigning Sassanid Empire had been reduced to a tributary, and Egypt and Syria had been wrested from the Byzantine rule. The vast expansion needed the management of those areas, as well as the booty collected from there. The first task was accomplished by the appointment of governors, while the second was managed by instituting *Diwan*. These issues raised further problems as now the question arose that who will govern those areas, and whether the booty collected from these areas belonged to the community, or to its head.

By appointing and giving precedence to his family (Abu Sufiyan) and amassing the fortunes for himself Usman initiated conflict in the two concepts of power. The first consisted in observing strictly the principles of *Quran* and giving place of pride to the "first converts", while the other paid greater attention to the efficiency of the apparatus of government. In the confrontation between Ali and Muawiya

following the judgement of Adhrub, the second concept held definitive sway, while also at the same time established the Ummayad dynasty.[13]

But while the Ummayads had already managed to get dynastic principle of caliphate firmly established in their family, they still had to manage not only their dominions but also the discontented element, which by this time also included, besides the *Kharijites* and *Shiites*, the non-Arab Muslims called *Mawali*. *Siyasa*, in the context of management and statecraft demanded the extinction of those elements which posed a threat to their authority, even if they were Muslims, an act denounced by the Prophet in his farewell address to the Ummah during his last pilgrimage. Thus, the Ummayads in the name of *siyasa* and in its new context of statecraft and management went beyond the *hadd* (limits) prescribed by the *shariat,* and did not hesitate to shed blood of the fellow Muslims. Thus, the debate and the extension on the usage of the term *siyasa* later found in the *Risala fil-Sahaba* of Ibn al-Mukaffa, as discussed above, is quite understandable.

But then what is particularly interesting in the *kharijite* and *shiite* movement against the Ummayads is the fact that now the authority as well as legitimacy of Caliphate started to be questioned. Both viewed Ummayads as opportunistic late-comers to Islam who had unlawfully usurped and perverted its most cherished institution. But while the *shiites* advocated the vesting of the Caliphate in the

[13] See Zuber Usman, *Ali bin Abu Talib,* Melaka: Abbas Bandong, 1974; Also see, Muhammad Shibli Numani, *Umar* ed. Jamil Qureshi based on the tr. by Zafar Khan, London: Oxford Centre of Islamic Studies, I.B. Tauris, 2004.

Prophet's family, or more specifically in the house of the slain caliph Ali, the *kharijite* acknowledged no authority but that of the Islamic community, which could elect or disown any caliph who went astray. This is precisely the period when *siyasa* as a concept started to question the legitimacy of its leader. Who should be the caliph, how should he govern, what are his powers, whether the powers of the caliph are subordinate to *ummah* were just the kind of issues found in the treatises of that period. Interestingly, the answers to the above queries were attempted within the framework of *siyasa*, which increasingly began to acquire new definitions.

The Ummayads not only innovated ways to counter the views of the *Kharijites* of owning the moral responsibility by caliph, they also had the principle of dynastic succession recognised. They also maintained the idea of unconditional obedience to the reigning caliph. The ideas of the *Kadariyya* movement against the *Kharijites* that the caliph's action cannot be scrutinised was also proclaimed and invoked by Yezid III. They also claimed the divine status by proclaiming the title of *Khalifa al-Allah.* The ruling Caliphs in fact considered themselves as appointed by God, and the above title came into use from the start of the Ummayad era, helping to establish firmly the duty of obedience to the dynasty.

The dynastic principle became more firmly established with the capture of power in the middle of the eighth century by Abbasids. Caliph al-Mahdi sought to adduce in addition the thesis according to which al-Abbas had been nominated by the Prophet himself as his successor. The Abbasid's panegyrists further tried to provide 'legitimacy' to the former, by asserting their claim that they have been

chosen by God to be the successor of the prophet.[14] Besides the issue of dynastic principle being associated with the office of Caliph, some other important developments could be traced, notably the emergence of the office of *Qazi* and that of great *amirates*.

The Seljukid period marks the end of an era and also the beginning of new period in Islamic thoughts and politics. This period saw decline in the powers of the Caliphs and the rise in the powers of religious class and *viziers*. Thus, what we have discussed in the beginning, the changing notions of *siyasa*, particularly in the works of Ghazali and Mawardi apparently is the result of the changing politics of the time, which due to the rise of Sultanates demanded harmonisation of *shariat* with *siyasa*.[15] The decline of the Abbasid Caliphate brought philosophers in terms with new concept of *Sultan*, who were not only trying to find a way not only to legitimize their rule but also to work out the purpose and a way through which that purpose could be attained. The changing notions of *siyasa* were thus inevitable.

The Seljukid period saw a great diversity within the empire; and in spite of the unifying factor of Islam and the general levelling tendency of Turkish military government, there was much local particularism and variety in the social ethics of different groups and communities. There was, for example, a standing opposition

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[14] See Muhammad Shaban, *The Abbasid Revolution*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979; Jacob Lassner, *The Shaping of Abbasid Rule*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980. As a primary source we have also consulted, Abu Jafar Muhammad ibn Jarir Tabari, *The Early Abbasid Empire*, tr. John Alden Williams, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1928.
[15] See Muhammad Abul Quasem, *The Ethics of Al-Ghazali: A Composite Ethics in Islam*, New York: Caravan Books, 1978; Leonard Binder, *Al-Ghazali's Theory of Islamic Government*, 2003.

between the settled and semi-settled population, between Turk and non-Turk; and between military and non-military population. With these varying differentiations the political thought of the period concerned itself with the issue of 'justice', which according to them could only be attained by following the tenets of *shariat*. The definition of *siyasa* at this time was to create conditions in which the Muslims could live a good life. The traditional view that the stability was assured by the maintenance of right religion and justice was broadly accepted. Ibn al-Balkhi who wrote during the reign of Muhammad b. Malik Shah, thus observes:

> Those possessed of learning have said, 'When a king is adorned by religion, and his rule is stable because of justice, kingship will not disappear from his house unless, God forbid, some disorder appears in religion or he commits tyranny.'[16]

By the time of the rise of Seljuks, the classical theory of Caliphate no longer corresponded with practice. The Caliphate had become merely a symbolic office maintaining links with the past; and the conception of sultanate as a simple delegation of authority by the Caliph to the temporal ruler could hardly be maintained in the political circumstances which prevailed. For, some governors had seized their provinces by force, while others thought they were not rebels, and were not subject to the appointment of the Caliph: an irregular situation which threatened the life of the community. The latter was supposed to exist in order to

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[16] See *The Cambridge History of Iran*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968-1991, 4, p.1091.

carry out the tenets of Islamic Law; and unless the *shariat* was its basis, there was no reason for its existence. It was thus imperative that the situation should be regularised. Mawardi, taking *siyasa* beyond the concept of *shariat* legalised usurpation of power, provided usurper conformed to *shariat*. From this stemmed a new system of administration composed of a series of interconnected jurisdictions whose stability depended not on the separation of the civil arm from the military, but on orthodoxy or 'right religion' and the personal loyalty of *sultan* to Caliph and of subordinate officials to the *sultan*, thus giving *siyasa* new meaning as highlighted in the works of Ghazali.

Thus, as discussed in the foregoing pages, the meaning and practical application of *siyasa* kept on evolving as the Islamic system itself evolved. From the mere and simplified meaning of 'management' it acquired new definitions and further additions were incorporated to it with the change in Islamic political structure. More often it defined the role and power of the Caliph initially, and then of sovereigns in the management of affairs, mainly religious but then to temporal as well. With this, the conflict with Islamic *shariat* and attempts to harmonise it with the politics of the time appear to be the major concern for the theologians who by the ninth century were the agents legitimizing the caliphs themselves. Thus, what we have on the eve of Mongolian conquest is the conflict between the *sharia'* and the practical demands of *siyasa*. *Siyasa* by the thirteenth century, and even before that, concerned itself with three issues; 'legitimacy' of the ruler or ruling house, the purpose of rule and the means to attain that purpose. It is in this context and framework that very often the purpose of rule and the means to attain that purpose often came into conflict with *shariat* and confused with other canons and

conventions, like the Mongolian *Yasa* as understood by al-Maqrizi, which later had a profound impact on Mughal *siyasa.* This shall remain the subject of study in the next chapter.

Literature Review and Justification for the Study

Most of the work done on Mughal polity or its political structure tends to depict its third ruler, Akbar (1556-1605) as the 'real' originator of the Mughal Political Structure. Thus, a group of historians having Marxist leanings led by Irfan Habib tends to discern a sound economic basis, notably the extracts from the land revenue system like Mansabdari and Jagirdari system that not only defined the relationship between the rulers and the ruling elites but also gave it a form of an 'empire'.[17] What actually constitute an empire, however, is dealt by Habib in reaction to the works of Cambridge School of thought (Muzaffar Alam, Christopher Bayly), and that too in the context of eighteenth century.[18] Thus, while the concept of 'empire' eventually gets challenged and 'defined' for the eighteenth century, it remains the case that the concept is left hanging for the earlier period, especially under the

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[17] See Irfan Habib, *Agrarian System of Mughal India*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999.

[18] See Irfan Habib, "The Eighteenth Century in Indian Economic History," in *On the Eighteenth Century As a Category of Asian History: Van Leur in Retrospect*, ed. Leonard Blusse and Semme Gaastra Hampshire, 1998. Irfan Habib vehemently criticised Alam and Bayly for their works on eighteenth century. See Muzaffar Alam, *The Crisis of Empire in Mughal North India : Awadh and the Punjab, 1707-48*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997; Christopher A. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770-1870*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983. Michael Fisher has also marvellously studied Awadh state during the later Mughals and their relation to Centre and has contributed immensely in the discussion, and debate on 'empire'. See Michael H. Fisher, *A Clash of Cultures: Awadh, The British and the Mughals*, London: Sangam, 1988.

founder of the dynasty, Babur, and his son and successor Humayun, for which we have but little information. Farhat Hasan's recent contribution, although takes the discussion further, but nevertheless the argument whether there was an 'empire' before Emperor Akbar's de facto assumption of sovereignty (1560) with its well-defined contours and notions of 'Kingship' and administrative structure is left ominous.[19]

The concept of an 'empire' in any study on political structure remains *sine qua non*. It is not only that such a discussion sheds important light on the relation of the ruler with the ruling elites within and outside its 'core' and 'periphery', but also it questions the very concept of 'Kingship', without which, perhaps no medieval political structure, or for that matter polity will have any relevance. It is through the actual and symbolic relationship of the King, *Padishah* or *Shahinshah* in our case, with *umara* and *mansabdars* that a polity can be best understood.

Quite a few sociological and political theories have been applied by historians to understand the political structure in general and Mughal polity in particular. Notable amongst them is Karl Wittfogel's theory of despotism and Max Weber theory of patrimonial societies. Wittfogel presents despotism as a forerunner of modern totalitarianism. Without delving at length into his conception of hydraulic society, its political co-relates, and the controversy concerning it, he describes

[19] See for details Farhat Hasan, *State and Locality in Mughal India : Power Relations in Western India, c. 1572-1730*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

these societies as 'dominated by a bureaucratically despotic state'.[20] S.N. Eisenstadt employs centralised bureaucracy as the defining characteristic of a general category of societies, which he calls 'centralised historical bureaucratic empires', and places between patrimonial societies, feudal societies, and city-states on one side and modern societies on the other in the scale of political development. Eisenstadt sees members of existing political elites whose interest tie them to the *status quo* as the main opponent of these centralising rulers.[21]

Max Weber's sociological theory on patrimonial societies has been best adopted to understand historical phenomenon by Stephen Blake, who in the model perceives regime as an extension of the household of the ruler. The ruler of a regime is juxtaposed with the role of a father in a patriarchal family. The army of the patrimonial state consists of the ruler's household troops; its administration is that of his establishment. When such a polity grew too large for the institutions of the household to produce an adequate army and administration, extra patrimonial officials and soldiers— the soldier's of the ruler's major subordinates—developed. The new officials were not bureaucrats in the modern sense because they served at the ruler's favour and did not obtain their positions solely on the basis of technical qualifications. The dilution of the personal ties to the ruler which made the polity coherent forced the patrimonial-bureaucratic leaders to develop new strategies to

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[20] Karl August Wittfogel, *Oriental Despotism: A Comparative Study of Total Power*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981.
[21] S. N. Eisenstadt, *The Political System of Empires*, London: Free Press of Glencoe, 1963.

develop and maintain the loyalty of their subordinates.[22] Blake, through his astute analysis of the model and the information furnished in *Ain-i Akbari* conclusively demonstrates that of the ideal types suggested for the Mughal Empire the patrimonial-bureaucratic empire is the most applicable. He argues that it is the rulers' household that a particular attention is required to understand the complexities of a political structure.

Anand Pandian's *Predatory Care: The Imperial Hunt in Mughal and British India* also uses sociological tools to analyse the metaphor of hunting within the rulers and ruling elites to counter the age long assumption of the oriental despotism of the Mughals under Akbar.[23] Pandian demonstrates that the British pursuit of man-eaters confronted feline terror with 'sovereign' might, securing the bodies and hearts of resistant subjects through spectacles of responsible force, while the Mughal hunt, on the other hand, took unruly nobles and chieftains as the object of its fearful care, winning their obedient submission through the exercise of predatory sovereignty.[24]

Scholars writing on the state-craft often employ predation as metaphor for exploitative and injurious rule. The predatory state, as described by Peter Evans, for example, 'preys on its citizenry, terrorising them, despoiling their common

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[22] Stephen Blake, "The Patrimonial-Bureaucratic Empire of the Mughals," *Journal of Asian Studies*, 39, 1979. Michael Fisher has also marvellously studied Awadh state during the later Mughals and their relation to Centre and has contributed immensely in the discussion and debate on 'empire'.
[23] See Anand S. Pandian, "Predatory Care: The Imperial Hunt in Mughal and British India," *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 14, 2001.
[24] Ibid, p.1.

patrimony and providing little in the way of services in return.[25] Studies such as these rely on common sensical opposition between predatory rule and the care of the general population. The logic of the latter objective has been developed most comprehensively by Michael Foucault, who suggests that the cultivation of welfare is the primary aim of a modern state power. Drawing a metaphor from animal shepherding, Foucault argues that a pastoral strategy (conducting the conduct of subject populations) underpins the governmentalisation of the state and the cultivation of the social body. The 'sovereign' power that Foucault opposes to pastoral power is itself predatory by nature: seizing and subtracting from his subjects, the 'sovereign' imposes death selectively to ensure his own survival.

But while the above cited discussions on the political structure, whether based on the theories of social sciences or more particularly on the Mughal Empire advanced our understanding on the nature of political structure in medieval dynasties, yet they were not without predicaments. Most studies dwell on the reign of Emperor Akbar or thereafter, and 'assumes' the political genius of the Emperor in the resulting polity that developed under him. Little or no advances were made to our understanding of what actually happened under his predecessors, what kind of polity was bequeathed to Akbar, or how did the Mughal polity actually evolved or developed under him. It is only in the recent years that such understanding of the reign of Akbar has been challenged with a flurry of activities among historians.

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[25] See Peter Evans, *Embedded Autonomy: States and Industrial Transformation*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995; Also see Michael Taussig, *Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wild Man: A Study in Terror and Healing*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987.

Such studies, from a wide range of angles, challenge the assumption that the political structure developed under Akbar was more than his political genius.

John F. Richards in his outstanding work revealed that Akbar had to elevate his position to that of the vice-regent of God to execute the authority. One of the ways was to recruit the *chilas* (disciples or personal followers).[26] Rosalind O' Hanlon's study that deals with the ideal of manliness (masculinity) also challenges the assumption that divine form of kingship as developed under Akbar was owing to the complexities in the existing political structure, and not a result of a mere genius. Published in 1999 and entitled *Manliness and Imperial Service in Mughal North India,* it deals with the notions, as has already been said, of ideal manliness (masculinity) in comparison to Akbar's projection of the ideal monarch.[27] O' Hanlon's article was, in fact, a breakthrough. It helped understand the notions of gender identity as well, particularly of masculinity in imperial Mughal North India. The scholar proposes that the Mughal Emperor was the centre of almost veritable 'domain', which projected, formed and even symbolised other realms of the empire. In projecting the notions of the ideal Mughal manhood, O'Hanlon extensively uses the source characterised as 'Mirror of Princes". Thus, *Mauziah-i Jahangiri* (1612) of Muhammad Baqir becomes a major source of information and analysis for O'Hanlon. From a theoretical perspective, the conclusions drawn from

[26] See J. F. Richards, 'The Formulation of Imperial Authority under Akbar and Jahangir' in his ed. *Kingship and Authority in South Asia,* Madison: University of Wisconsin South Asian Studies, 1978.

[27] See Rosalind O'Hanlon, "Manliness and Imperial Service in Mughal North India," *Journal of Economic and Social History of the Orient,* 42, 1999.

such sources provide interesting details of what the perception of ideal masculinity in terms of elite, particularly the ruling class should be.

Ruby Lal's recent feministic work details out the nuances of a tribal family and political structure under Babur and Humayun, before commenting on the structure as evolved under Akbar. Lal argues, from her training in gender that how the various institutions were 'institutionalised' under Akbar, including *harem*. But while Lal supposedly setting out to bring to forefront the lives of "the mothers of royal children, their nurses and servants, and others who formed part of this (changing) intimate circle" does not go beyond listing of wet-nurses, and is noticeably silent on the court or royal family servants (eunuchs, dancing girls and prostitutes).[28] The book simply revolves around elite women in the Mughal household, thereby falling into the same trap for which she criticises Rosalind O' Hanlon. It is hard to follow the nature of this so called 'intimate circle' without analysing the role of eunuchs, wet-nurses and armed women retainers, leave aside other menials involved in this circle. On a similar note, Munis Faruqui also deals with the complexities of various institutions which Akbar had to counter to elevate his position.[29]

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[28] Ruby Lal, *Domesticity and Power in the Early Mughal World: Historicizing the Haram*, Cambridge, Cambridge Studies in Islamic civilization 2005, p. 22. The author simply lists the wet nurses of Akbar (pp. 188-193) without examining their role and also their social status. Similarly there is no mention of eunuchs who formed a major part of this 'intimate circle' apart from a brief discussion Itimad Khan (p.195).

[29] See Munis D. Faruqui, "The Forgotten Prince: Mirza Hakim and the Formation of the Mughal Empire in India," *Journal of Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 48, 2005.

One of the reasons why our understanding of the political structure with its Kingship remains relatively little for Babur and Humayun, partly owes to the two monumental research pieces carried long time back by Iqtidar Alam Khan and R. P. Tripathi.[30] These works had so paramount influence on the historiography of the Mughals that the latter's work was included in totto in the recently edited book, long after when it was actually published. Both these works continue to dominate the Mughal historiography even to this day, with scholars tentatively accepting their deductions. Iqtidar Alam Khan concluded that the concept of sovereignty and kingship under Akbar and his predecessors in South Asia was a manifestation of the same concepts in Central Asia, which he, for some reasons classify as 'Turko-Mongol theory of Kingship.' Basing his study on narrowly acute source material of Central Asia, Iqtidar Alam Khan assumed that the 'sovereign' in Central Asia, owing to tribal traditions, *yasa*, the concept which he uncritically and instrumentally employs, were never absolute. Since the early Mughals borrowed the same traditions in South Asia, it explains the vulnerable position of Babur and Humayun, and even Akbar early in his reign. Thus, Iqtidar Alam Khan accepting a teleological understanding of a so called 'Turko-Mongol theory of Kingship' explains the revolt of *Turani* nobles between 1560 and 1567 against Akbar as a

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[30] See Iqtidar Alam Khan, "The Turko-Mongol Theory of Kingship," *Medieval India - a Miscellany*, II, 1972; R. P. Tripathi, "The Turko- Mongol Theory of Kingship," in *The Mughal State 1526-1750*, ed. Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998.

glaring example of the Central Asian concept, which nullifies the absolute status of a monarch.[31]

Iqitidar Alam Khan assumes that the Turkish word *tura* and *yasa* always refer to fundamental law or code, which reflects the political theory of the legislator, i.e. Chinggis Khan. A plethora of literature ensuing from scholarly debates among the Central Asian scholars and others, which Khan neither acknowledged nor informed his understanding about some of the central question in the Central Asian polity have inevitably left his work somewhat superficial.

David Ayalon in his usual style of rigorously testing etymologies of words, as well as the original sources opined that Great *yasa*, or canons devised by Chinggis Khan existed, and that too in rather a written form.[32] Had it not been for the equally laborious work of David Morgan, our understanding on *yasa* as informed by Ayalon would have remained conclusive. Morgan challenges the conclusion of Ayalon and put forward his own understanding on the 'Great *Yasa*' of Chinggis Khan which he thinks was never written and was nothing more than the existing tribal laws. Both these scholars worked from a wide variety of original sources, including Persian and Chinese. Thus, their work questions the very concept of *Yasa* on which Khan and Tripathi based their hypothesis.

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[31] This was in another work of I.A. Khan, but which carried over his erroneous understanding of the 'Turko-Mongol theory of Kingship.' See Iqtidar Alam Khan, "The Nobility of Akbar and Development of His Religious Policy, 1560-1580," *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society* 1 (1968).

[32] See David Ayalon, "The Great Yasa of Chingiz Khan: A Re-Examination," *Studia Islamica*, 33 (1973).

The works on Central Asia by other scholars notably like Peter Jackson, Rene Grousset, Prawdin and Barthold remains indispensable for this research. The secondry works by these and other scholars provided a platform from where the study on the evolution of Mughal political structure could well be attempted, although from a different perspective. Since the literature on Central Asia is too vast to be summarised in the present small section on literature review, these have been incorporated in the Chapters 1 and 2 respectively.

Sources and Methodology

The sources to study Mughal polity in South Asia vary from their nature to their typology. Besides the typical sources for the Mughals, the kind of study as laid out in this research necessitates the use of Central Asian sources, as will be discussed later. However, court chronicles, personal memoirs, biographical dictionaries, general history works, epistolary records and eulogies (mainly in Persian), together with the European travellers' accounts, and also works by various missionaries provide ample evidences to construct the evolution and influences on Mughal polity.

For choice of sources, Ruby Lal makes a brilliant point. Says Lal, "......I have not unearthed any new sources. Instead, I have returned to sources that have been

available all along."[33] The historians have rarely exploited some sources used for the present research. For example, Abdul Qadir Badauni's *Najat al-Rashid* or Abul Qasim Namkin's *Munshat-i Namkin,* two important books that helps immensely in understanding the reign of Emperor Akbar have rarely been exploited by historians. Of course, other sources were only re-visited. They were already well known, only the perspective on them shifts. The originality of this research, thus, lies in the re-interpretation of facts, while at the same time supplementing information from Central Asian sources. This thesis, therefore, proceeds on the basis of a 'rediscovered archive', to use Ruby Lal's words, to investigate the political structure of Mughal Empire. Sources, be they Persian, or the accounts of European travellers, still offer many challenges, if the purpose is to study these sources from a comparative perspective. Much of the predicament depends upon how to extract facts.

The problem of 'facts' raises many difficulties. Therefore, the problem of 'facts' shall be explored first for its numerous difficulties. Let us begin with the problems of Persian sources, because while attempting to narrate a history of Mughal Empire, scholars generally make Persian sources primary, continuously referring to them as 'authentic'. In the words of Ruby Lal:

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[33] Lal, *Domesticity and Power in the Early Mughal World*, p. 52.

> The choice of certain sources as basic and central has in turn tended to perpetuate certain kind of histories. The interest in agrarian-administrative institutional histories for example has made chronicles like Akbarnama and the Ain-i Akbari appear essential to any undertaking in Mughal history. Relying on texts like the Akbarnama, historians have often uncritically reproduced the primary sources themselves, and therefore duplicated one or another chronicler's assessment of the empire, imperial relations, and other related matters.34

The problem of reliance on one particular kind of source material (court chronicles), besides producing specific histories (political and economic), also encouraged a specific mode of history writing, namely narrative. Peter Hardy highlighted the problem with this kind of methodology as early as in the 1960's. According to Peter Hardy:

> It was not only that the majority of students of medieval Indo-Muslim rule confined their attention to one class of source material; they also confined their aims to the writing of one form of history, the political, and in one mode, the narrative.[35]

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[34] Ibid., p.55.
[35] Peter Hardy, *Historians of Medieval India: Studies in Indo-Muslim Historical Writing*, London: Luzac, 1960, p. 3.

This antiquated methodology appears to be principally responsible for giving undue prominence to court chronicles, which resulted in their uncritical examination, and to the neglect of other and new branches in history writing. Further, this approach gave rise to two further problems. Firstly, the inability to critically examine a source in a broad perspective (the objective and audience of the historian, as well as, the socio-political conditions of the historian's time), and secondly, the neglect of other works compiled during the same period.

What is more interesting is the complete divorce of South Asian history from the history of contemporary dynasties like those of the Safavids and the Ottomans. A comparative approach might have resulted in the broadening of the intellectual dimensions of the modern historian, which might have opened newer areas of research. Also, one more result of the heavy reliance on the court chronicles was to limit itself to the fortunes of the king, his exploits in wars or in praising the whole dynasty. In the words of Peter Hardy, "But Sultans, wazirs, amirs, soldiers and saints so completely fill the foreground of these works that the spectator not only cannot see the background, but is left unaware that a background exists."[36]

Along with this, the positions of the court historians have also to be kept in mind. There was rarely a court historian who was not recruited in the nobility, and therefore, was not professionally obliged to the king in writing what could earn praise for the latter and his whole dynasty. There appears to be a specific factor

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[36] Ibid., p. 111.

responsible for medieval historian rhetoric and undue praise of the King. The decline of the Abbasid Caliphate towards the middle of the tenth century, as the *de-facto* 'sovereign' of the Muslim world, left no opportunity to professional historians but to look towards their own King to assume the function in the Muslim community previously allocated to the Caliph.[37] It appears that this factor was primarily responsible for a medieval historian's rhetorical praise of the King. He had to elevate the sovereign's position and image.

Yet another reason for this class of rhetoric in court chronicles appears to be the urge on the part of historians for reward. Praising the King and highlighting his political or military exploits, as well as, protecting his failures, appears to be the easiest way to earn reward either in monetary terms or in terms of an increase in rank. Abul Fazl, by writing the kind of history mentioned above was quickly promoted besides getting proximity to the Emperor.

Apparently, it is for these reasons that court histories reveal great similarities in terms of their content, as also, rhetoric. In the words of Julie Scott Meisami:

> ....most of those who wrote history were court officials: scribes, secretaries, the occasional vizier. They were members of a class who shared a common educational background, certain stylistic approaches to

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[37] Ibid., p. 113.

> literary composition and specific political concerns; their writings therefore exhibit many common assumptions as to the purposes and the proper content of history, as well as how it should be written.[38]

It is, therefore, very important that one should approach court histories with caution, that is, not taking 'facts' at their face value. Abul Fazl has written that Emperor Akbar himself would suggest corrections on the rough draft of *Akbarnama,* which was read out to him. Under these circumstances, it is very unlikely that the Emperor would have given space to those facts which might suggest to the audience (mainly the ruling class) his failures, for he was constructed as divinely gifted in that very book. Marilyn Waldman draws a brilliant caricature on the methodology of the scholars:

> The criteria for the validity for the facts obtained from historical narratives are largely external; rarely are they related to the internal dynamics of the work from which the facts have been taken or to the interaction of the author's mind with the material he has presented, matters that have long been important in European and American historiography. Systematic methods and

[38] Julie Scott Meisami, *Persian Historiography to the End of the Twelfth Century,* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999, p.6 ; Also see preface in Harbans Mukhia, *Historians and Historiography During the Reign of Akbar,* New Delhi: Blackwell Publishers, 1976.

> categories of analysis through which such questions could be approached are virtually nonexistent.[39]

Julie Scott Meisami quite rightly argues that the medieval historian's primary interest lay less in recording 'facts' of history and more in the construction of a meaningful narrative.[40] Thus, the interest of medieval Persian historians, particularly court historians, was to create a meaningful narrative that corroborated with the high image of the emperor. In doing so, these court historians were quite selective in their choice of facts. Many times some facts were deliberately omitted which could potentially harm the popular image of the emperor, for those facts would disagree with the emperor's high sounding titles. At other times, if the narrative required the presentation of a particular 'fact', the medieval historian would cleverly camouflage the 'fact' in rhetoric. One might cite here the deliberate matching of horoscope of Akbar with that of Timur, as well as linking the former with not only the mythological characters in Central Asian history, but also with the empire builders' like Chinggis and Timur.

Mughal court historians, including the celebrated Abul Fazl, wrote a narrative of the kind just described. The attempt on the life of Emperor Akbar owing to his forced marriage with Indian Muslims, or the revolt of clergy during 1580-1582,

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[39] Marilyn Robinson Waldman, *Toward a Theory of Historical Narrative: A Case Study in Perso-Islamicate Historiography*, Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1980, p. 4.
[40] Meisami, *Persian Historiography*, p. 4.

find no place in the works of Abul Fazl. There appears to be thus no reason why one should not put to test the writings of Abul Fazl or for that matter, of any other court historian. Abul Fazl, like many other court historians, was himself at the centre of Mughal politics or at least was perceived so by other courtiers. The allegations against him, of manoeuvring posts and rank of nobles, as well as corrupting the mind of the emperor come not only from Badauni, but also, from Akbar's foster brother, Mirza Aziz Kuka and Emperor Jahangir, the son and successor of Akbar who ultimately had Abul Fazl murdered.

However, it can hardly be debated that in terms of raw material for history, court historians were definitely more advantageously placed than other historians. They had access to official records, statistics, decrees which might have given credibility to their account, and could form the basis of a modern historian's interpretation. Still, given the reasons outlined above, it remains very important to critically examine the court histories against the backdrop of their style of purpose, the targeted audience, as also, the socio-political conditions of the time.

With this methodology, that is, with a question mark on court official history, information shall be assessed to help construct a political history of Mughal Empire. In his attempt to highlight the high status of Emperor Akbar, Abul Fazl uses the high sounding titles such as, of the sovereign from the Iranian *Pishdadian* dynasty and also from Sassanians, but also links Emperor Akbar to modest Islamic title of *Khalifa*. This dichotomy has hardly been critically examined before from the perspective of the objective and target audience of the author.

Much of the predicament arising out of court histories, for reasons already given, could partially be overcome by adding, as well as, corroborating information coming from non-official accounts. Though written mostly in Persian, and most often dealing with court and King, these accounts are at least free of a committed rhetoric. Given the reliance earlier placed on official histories, it is no wonder that these non-official accounts have not been fully exploited. Thus, we find that although *Akbarnama,* and its detailed appendix *Ain-i Akbari,* remain popular sources for historians, the work of Badauni (*Najat al-Rashid)* has rarely been critically exploited by scholars terming the latter as a work dealing with issues other than the politics of the time.[41]

The content of *Najat al-Rashid* and *Muntakhab al-Tavarikh,* both works of Badauni, reveal similarities with court histories yet the styles differ sharply. Badauni is critical of those very socio-religious policies formulated by Emperor Akbar, which were praised by his official historian Abul Fazl, attributing them to the emperor's divine inspiration. This casual difference in the presentations of 'facts' by the two historians of the same period underlines the basic question that exists between the 'fact' and its 'presentation'.

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[41] Peter Hardy describes it as a work on Sufism whereas I. A. Zilli terms it as a theological treatise. See Peter Hardy, ed., *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. I, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1960, 1, p. 856;Ishtiyaq Ahmad Zilli, "Badauni Revisited: An Analytical Study of Najat ur Rashid," in *Medieval India Essays in Intellectual Thought and Culture*, ed. Iqtidar Husain Siddiqui, New Delhi: Manohar, 2003, p. 149.

Badauni, a courtier himself, wrote *Muntakhab al-Tavarikh* in secret, for his strong criticism of Akbar. Unlike Ibn Arab Shah who neither wrote in secret, nor was a court historian but who vehemently criticised Timur. Badauni's book basically is the history of the reign of Emperor Akbar. Initially, the content does not highlight the author's criticism of Akbar. The author, in fact, has written about his own willingness to join the imperial troops to show his fidelity to Akbar. However, somewhere about the middle of the book, the author's criticism of the emperor becomes evident. In fact quite suddenly, the book begins to highlight those 'facts' which prove Akbar's policies as glaring failures. Two reasons are generally ascribed for Badauni's critique of Akbar. Firstly, his rise in imperial recognition compared to Abul Fazl was slow, which was further aggravated by the fact that both historians were students of the same teacher, Shaikh Mubarak, the father of Abul Fazl. Secondly, Badauni belonged to the clergy, which did not approve of Akbar's policies in religion. But then, is not the objectivity of Badauni's account also questionable, given his personal grudges against the emperor. True, Badauni's account is as subjective as that of Abul Fazl.

Leaving aside the lack of objectivity in Badauni for the moment, let us see the kind of 'facts', as well as, the kind of narration that were chosen just because each targeted an audience, as well as, a set of social conditions. Apart from ascribing interpretation of 'facts', different from those provided by Abul Fazl, Badauni adds many new facts which otherwise do not find place in official histories. His interpretation of the attempted assassination of Akbar completely differs from that of Abul Fazl's, and provides a new understanding of the Mughal attitude to sexuality and its construction of femininity. The link which Badauni provide for

this attempted assassination by tracing and linking it to the customs of Chinggis Khan is equally interesting for it is contrary to the perception of the same canons as depicted by Abul Fazl. Badauni's critical observation on some of the members of Akbar's foster family provides quite interesting details about the role of wet-nurses and their kins in the Mughal body politics.

It appears that Badauni had a specific audience in mind. His language and style of writing, as well as, the presentation of 'facts' are so different from official histories, which probably shows that *Muntakhab al-Tavarikh* was not meant for the elite. The work was probably aimed at Mughal masses with the objective of apprising them of the situation at court, and the attitude of the emperor and the courtiers. The hypothesis is further strengthened by reading Badauni's other work *Najat al-Rashid,* left out by scholars as a work of theology.[42]

A comparative study of Badauni's two works also reveals abundant similarities. It appears that perhaps *Najat al- Rashid* was meant as a theological explanation of the issues that were raised in *Muntakhab al-Tavarikh* on the attitude of Akbar towards various political institutions. Basing his judgement on *Quran* and the sayings of the Prophet (which in any case needs to be checked), Badauni was perhaps trying to convey, again to the general masses, that Akbar was not being the conformist that all expected him to be.

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[42] See footnote on page 51.

Abul Qasim Namkin was yet another out-of-court historian. Along with Badauni, Abul Qasim Namkin in *Munshat-i Namkin* also touches upon those very issues. *Munshat-i Namkin* has hardly been exploited by the scholars and had only recently been published. The following observation by John O.Ward would be true of both Badauni and Namkin who says, "an age, characterised by a rich variety of historical writing will be an age in which a significant number of persons endowed with literacy find themselves in problematical or challenging political or social circumstances," stands true for the reign of Akbar.[43] What is particularly interesting about these non-official histories is the contrasting narration of the 'facts' with official history. It is hard to say whether these non-official historians aimed at a general uprising against Akbar or not. However, it is clear that there was quite in progress a discourse on power, being almost a language game of manoeuvre in which a subject is formulated, transacted, shaped, regulated, managed, analysed and discussed. Emperor Akbar appears to be the subject in this discourse between those who were paid (official) to write about him and those who were writing on their own.

This power-discourse, between official and unofficial historians is evident throughout the literary history of Mughal Empire. It is full of information that could help framing a history of political structure under early Mughals, which this thesis aims to explore. In such a situation the role of audience becomes significant, because that audience would determine how the 'fact' or 'facts' are presented.

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[43] Cited from , p. 4.

When the audience is not the elite but the general masses, the thrust shall shift from wars and conquests and the way the king rules the country and looks after the masses, the way the king lives, that is, his personal life. Thus, they would want to know what went in inside the palace, what did the royalty wear, what did they eat, and how did they spend their time, in short, the manner of their living. Military exploits, or political alliance were of very little significance for the masses. Presence in the court gave the un-official historians first hand knowledge, and it is because of this that these unofficial historians minus the official historians' penchant for rhetoric gave to their audience, the masses, insightful information about the personal details of the ruling house.

Two of the Mughal emperors, Babur and Jahangir, besides a princess Gulbadan Begum have left their memoirs. It is hard to categorise, Gulbadan Begum's memoir in this category, since it was written at the order of her nephew Akbar.

Out of the three memoirs noted above, Gulbadan Begum's *Humayunnama*, has largely been neglected by the modern historians.[44] Written on the orders of her nephew, Emperor Akbar (1556-1605), the memoirs of Gulbadan Begum have, not been properly utilised by modern historians, although the information provided by her about Humayun's reign especially on the role of the imperial ladies and other members of the royal family, besides the private lives of Babur and Humayun are unique.

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[44] Lal, *Domesticity and Power in the Early Mughal World*, p. 56.

A careful study of the work would help a student of history to extract abundant information about Mughal politics originating from women quarters and the role of the members of royal family in it.

The memoirs of Babur and Jahangir are quite well known to modern historians. Both these works have been extensively used by Mughal historians in preparing the history of Babur and Jahangir's reign and are well cited in political, military and administrative narratives. These memoirs are particularly useful for a study of Mughal princes; their training and attitude towards politics of the time. *Baburnama*, however, provides interesting information about customs and practices of his forefathers, which greatly helps us in reconstructing the role of these influences on Mughal body-politics. Interesting confessions are also recorded about 'drinking parties', and, homosexuality and its linkages to Central Asian customs makes it even more refreshing.

The authors of these memoirs, Babur and Jahangir were members of a patriarchal society and might have followed the literary genre and conventions, which were so peculiar to a patriarchal society. Although, the information coming from these memoirs is plenty yet it needs to be studied in its proper context with not only literary conventions in mind, but also noting the patriarchal ideas of the construction of feminine identity. Stephen Dale has also highlighted this point in

relation to Babur's confession of his 'love' for a boy and homosexuality in general.[45]

Biographical (*Rijal*) literature substantially adds to the information, furnished in other Persian works. Three biographical dictionaries of Mughal nobles, in Persian, excluding a list compiled by Abul Fazl and elaborated by Blochmann are available. The translator has used the earliest known dictionary, *Maasir al-Umra* compiled in the eighteenth century by Shahnavaz Khan. Yet another well-known dictionary of the same period is *Tazkira al-Umra* of Kewal Ram. Quite recently, still another biographical dictionary called *Dhakhira al-Khavanin* of Farid Bhakkari, and belonging to the seventeenth century has become known.[46] Surprisingly, the authors of the both biographical dictionaries cited earlier, had largely utilised Farid Bhakkari's work. Shahnavaz Khan, though acknowledging his acquaintance with *Dhakhira al-Khavanin,* unjustly criticises it by saying that the work was based on heresy. All three biographical dictionaries are of immense value for the students of Mughal history. These dictionaries provide some interesting details of the lives of Mughal nobles. Again, this literature is of immense value for looking into the lives and role of the nobility, their rise and status.

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[45] See Stephen F. Dale, "The Poetry and Autobiography of the Babur-Nama," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 55, 1996, as well as Stephen F. Dale, "Steppe Humanism: The Autobiographical Writings of Zahir al-din Muhammad Babur," *International Journal of Middle East Studies,* 22, 1990.
[46] See Farid Bhakkari, *Dhakira al-Khavanin*, ed. Syed Moinul Haq, Karachi: Pakistan Historical Society, 1970.

The information gathered from the above cited Persian sources could be supplemented, as well as, corroborated by consulting a large number of Mughal miniature paintings available in libraries across the world, the best collection being in the Victoria and Albert Museums in London and at the Chester Beatty library in Dublin. The present study has also benefited greatly from the study of miniatures.

The period of Akbar's life covered by the miniatures at Victoria and Albert Museum, for example, conveys the socio-political conditions of the time. The themes were carefully chosen as it seems for illustration. The opening illustration depicts Akbar hunting, in what seems to be simply a standard royal image. However, studied carefully with the text, it tells us that it was not a standard painting depicting a usual hunting scene. This particular hunting scene had special influence not only on the future of Akbar but also on the Mughal Empire. This particular hunting was undertaken as a strategy to oust the powerful vice-regent of Akbar, Bairam Khan and the stressing of young emperor's independent authority.[47] Similarly, the depiction of treachery is no less important if studied with the text. This particular painting relates to the events after the conquest of Malwa in 1561. Adham Khan, the commander of the royal forces and foster brother of Akbar, allegedly did not send the war spoils including 'beautiful' dancing girls of the ruler of Malwa to the Mughal court. To assert his authority again, Akbar rapidly marched towards Malva where dancing girls were presented to him. The painting

[47] For details see Susan Stronge, *Painting for the Mughal Emperor: The Art of the Book 1560-1660* London: Victoria and Albert Publications, 2002, p. 60.

depicts various girls dancing for Akbar, a symbol asserting his unchallenged status.[48] Thus, Mughal miniature paintings stand out in their value for understanding Mughal poltics and its structure. Quite a few paintings link Mughal Emperors to Timur or to the other Central Asian mythological characters.

Keeping in mind the discussion in the preceding pages, the methodology for the present research could be summarised in the following points:

1) Extensive use of Central Asian primary and secondary literature

2) A wide variety of Mughal primary sources——written, pictorial, indigenous and traveller accounts will be examined and exploited for this research.

3) The use of political and sociological theories to understand the political structure

4) Supplementing and testing the information in a wider perspective so as to include the other contemporary and near contemporary Muslim dynasties.

This four-point methodology has been adhered to, in order to complete this research.

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[48] Ibid., pp. 65-68.

Structure of the Thesis

The present thesis incorporates chapters dealing theoretical issues as well as chronological evolution of political structure under the Mughals up to 1575. Having already discussed the definitions, implications and evolution of the term and concept *siyasa* with in Islamic political structure, the Chapter One immediately concerns itself with the Central Asian constitutional system, popularly known as the *yasa* of Chinggis Khan, and its overlapping with the Islamic *siyasa*. Naturally then quite a bit of Mongolian political history also gets incorporated there, which eventually strengthen our argument further. Chapter Two deals with the continuity of the Chinggisid traditions under Timur, modifications' according the development in politics whereby issues like 'legitimacy' and 'justice' becomes prominent in medieval concept of *siyasa*. Chapter Three confines itself to the reign of the fi-st Mughal emperor Babur and his position in Central Asia. This chapter also notes the subtle changes in the evolution process and can possibly be called as evolution of Mughal polity. Chapter Four and Five, traces the chronological events in Mughal South Asia under Humayun and Akbar whereby the structure of Mughal politics viz a viz *siyasa* finally gets evolved, at least by 1575.

CHAPTER- ONE

Interrogating *Siyasa* and the *Yasa:* Paradigms to Rule

One major predicament in studying the structure of Mughal polity has been the incessant and inexorable efforts either to trace it back to Central Asia, the region from where they traced their lineage, or to Islamic system of governance, which crept into and intermingled with the Central Asian form as early as fourteenth century, if not before.[49] Not surprisingly then were the obvious conclusions drawn on the nature and structure of Mughal polity before Akbar (r. 1556-1605) as one lacking absolutism and centralisation.[50] Few researches on the first two rulers of Mughal household in South Asia, Babur and Humayun, seldom probed the vital issues and also finer nuances on theoretical perspectives and their practical applications highlighted above.[51] Cumulative effect of such researches, thus have left a sort of paucity in providing an advance over our understanding on the nature of polity adopted or even extended into the Mughal dominion in South Asia by their first members.

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[49] Some recent and earlier works on Mughal polity discusses the role of Central Asian and Islamic polity, mainly *yasa* and *shariat* to explain the lack of centralisation and absolutism observed during the reign of first two Mughal emperors. See I.A Khan, "The Turko-Mongol Theory of Kingship;" R.P Tripathi, "The Turko-Mongol Theory of Kingship."

[50] Such conclusions have been repeatedly drawn. See, for example, I.A Khan, "The Nobility of Akbar and Development of His Religious Policy, 1560-1580."

[51] The secondary literature available on Babur mainly deals with his administration or his conquests. See Ahsan Raza Khan, "Babur's Settlement of His Conquests in Hindustan" paper presented at the Indian History Congress, 29th Session, 1967; Yog Raj Malhotra, *Babur's Nobility and Administration in Hindustan*, Jalandhar: ABS, 1996; Rushbrook Williams, *An Empire Builder of the Sixteenth Century*, London: Longman, Green & Co., 1918.

While it is clear from various researches that the structure of Mughal polity definitely acquired prominent features as well as impetus from 1560 onwards, it still remains the case that the issue of political structure under its first two rulers is left hanging on several important fronts, especially as regards the structure of polity if at all it existed in a proper manner. However, in order to understand structure of polity in the early days of Mughal conquest of North India, a minute analysis of political structure under the Mongols in Central Asia, having already discussed the concept of *siyasa* in the previous chapter, is of prime importance.

An attempt is made in this section to sketch in somewhat broad strokes an important aspect of the Mongolian political or constitutional system based on and referred to as the 'Great *yasa*'. Much of our primary source material for the Mongols and their polity remains the same as discussed in the previous chapter. *Tarikh-i Jahan Gusha* of Ala al-din Ata Mulk b. Baha al-din Muhammad al-Juvaini (1226-1283) and *Jami al-tawarikh* of Rashid al-din Fadl-allah b. Imad al-dawla Abil-Khair al-Hamadani (1247-1318) provide us insightful information on the issues of politics after the death of Chinggis Khan.[52] Juvaini wrote only a few years after Mongke's accession and the execution of most of the adult members of the lines of Ogedei and Chaghtai. Rashid al-din's work, similarly, dates from a time when the rivalry of the Il Khan's and the Golden Horde was already of forty

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[52] Both these works were composed under the Il Khan's by persons who ranked high among their administrative agents. See introduction of Ata Mulk Juwaini, *Tarikh-i Jahan Gusha*, J.A Boyle tr., 2 vols., Manchester, 1958, vol.I. For Rashid, see Rashid al-din, *The Successors of Genghis Khan*, J.A Boyle tr., London : Persian Heritage Series, 1971.

years' standing and thus contains much more vital information on the conflicts between different Chinggisid houses. The Jochids find their narration in the works of authors, who were not immediately concerned with Mongol history, namely the historians of Mamluk Egypt and Syria, some of whom have already been introduced in the previous chapter, including al-Umari (1301-1349). Many details not found elsewhere, and which throw fresh light on issues of politics of the time within the imperial family may be gleaned from non-Islamic sources. The earliest of these is the *Maghol un niuca tobcaan (Secret History of the Mongols)*, most of which was written around 1228 but which contains later additions and may have been doctored by the Toluids.[53]

1.1 The *Siyasa* and Mongolian *Yasa*: The Overlappings

Politically speaking, if on the one hand the Abbasid Caliphate was on the fringe of decline towards the beginning of thirteenth century, the Mongols under Chinggis Khan on the other were exhibiting enough promise to overtake the Muslim lands and to substitute it with their own tribal system and canons. Having itself evolved from a tribal base, the Islamic political system was not utterly surprised to the tribal laws when the former interacted with the latter through military contacts.

[53] See Aead Sh. Bira, "The "Mongol-un Niyuca Tobciyan" and the legend and folktale contacts of Nomadic people," *International Association for Mongol Studies Bulletin* 1 (1990).

Besides the similarities noticed in the rapidity of the conquest and in tribal origins, both Islam and the Mongol political system share some other similar characteristics. Whereas the military success of both depended on the ability of Prophet of Islam and Chinggis Khan in unifying multitudes of warring tribes under them, and also giving them a common cause to sustain that unity, there was also an infallible prescription, or code of conduct, the *shariat* and *yasa*, which defined and approved their *siyasa* or political systems. But while the Islamic *siyasa* had started to differentiate between divinely and temporal *siyasa* as has been discussed previously, the Mongol system—— still in its infancy—— had no such distinction. It is only when these two political systems interacted that the bewilderment arising primarily from the Muslim sources regarding *shariat, siyasa* and *yasa* started to appear.

Having already discussed the features of *siyasa* within the Islamic framework and its adaptation in the tenth and eleventh century, it seems important now to describe at some length Mongolian *yasa* and their polity before and during the time they came into contact with Muslim lands. It is actually this *yasa* which along with the legendary image of Chinggis Khan formed the core of scholarly studies. The debate on the *yasa* actually starts from the year 1206 when at the *qurultai* (assembly) Chinggis Khan allegedly framed some laws. But what was the importance of the year 1206? What were the reasons behind promulgation of some new laws by Chinggis Khan when there were already tribal laws and conventions? To find answers to these questions, let us begin by analysing the polity of Central Asia before the rise of Chinggis Khan.

Before the Mongolian conquest, Central Asia was divided into multitudes of tribes mainly Turkish. The *Oghuz* were living in the area between Caspian Sea and Farab, the Turkish name which was Qarachuk. In the eleventh century they were living in Isfijab——Sayram——in the Syr Darya region and in the steppes north of this river.[54] With the spread of Islam among the Oghuz some of them started to appear sedentary. The sedentary Oghuz did not participate on a large scale in the political activity and migrations of the nomadic conquest.

The *Kirghiz* lived in the region of the Abaqan River beyond the Kokmen Mountains also known as Sayan Mountains. Thereafter, they invaded the Uighur ahd and took the region of the Orkhon River.

The *Chighil* were living in the north west of Issik Kol. Gradually acquiring more importance they became a separate and independent tribe in the eleventh century. The *Yaghma* were living in the region of Kashgar. The leaders of this tribe bore the title of Bughral. The title led Barthold to believe that the *Kara Khanids* belonged to the *Yaghma*. The *Karluk, Argu* and *Tuhsi* were living in the Chu valley.[55]

Thus, by the time of Mongolian invasion, Central Asia was already the land of Turk. However, as a result of the Arab invasion, non-Turkish people had long

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[54] For geographical local and description of various tribes, see Rene Grousset, *The Empire of the Steppes: A History of Central Asia*, tr. Naomi Walford, London: Rutgers University Press, 1999.
[55] Ibid.

dominated the western part of it. This invasion had had the effect of putting the Turks into contact with Islam and they had the opportunity to learn the principles of Islam in more detail.

The Mongols themselves were divided into various tribes known probably as *dada* and not as 'Mongol' or 'Mong-gu'.[56] *Kerait*, the most influential tribe in the area is just one example, which in turn was itself a combination of various tribes.[57] As is most often the case in a tribal set-up these sub tribes had their own rulers and leaders.[58] Chinggis Khan's father, Yesugai was a chief of the *Kiyat* clan with the modest title of 'ba'atur' or '*baghatur'*.[59]

The Mongol society was based on *obok* system, which recognised as relatives other clans who have descended from the same ancestor, and therefore inter-marriage among such clans was forbidden. A group of relatives of the same clans were called '*yasun*' (bone).[60] These tribal people were differentiated on the basis of '*yasun*' and '*omogh*' (clan).[61] Clans were grouped into tribes known as *nigen* and

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[56] Yuan Chao Pi Shu, *The Secret History of Mongol Dynasty*, Kwei Wei Sun tr Aligarh Department of History, 1957, p 12.
According to the testimony of Meng Hu the word 'Mongol' was an official term only known to the common people. Thus, there is no other way than to conclude 'Dada' to be identified with the 'Mong-gu' or 'Mongols' of Chinese words

57 Togen Isenbike, *Flexibility and Limitations in Steppe Formation The Kerait Khanate and Chinggis Khan*, Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1988, p.124.

[58] Ibid; p.127.

[59] Rene Grousset, *The Empire of the Steppes A History of Central Asia*, pp.198-99.

[60] E.D Phillips, *The Mongols*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1969, p.26.

[61] Togen Isenbike, *Flexibility and Limitations in Steppe Formation The Kerait Khanate and Chinggis Khan*, p 27

tribes into an *ulus* or people or state.[62] In the twelth century, the Mongols were divided into many *ulus*, which according to Vladimirtsov, signifies both tribe and small nation.[63] The Mongols on the basis of their living standard were theoretically divided into the pastoral tribe of the steppe, and the hunting and fishing tribes of the forest.[64]

Barthold and Vladimirtsov are of the opinion that pastoral tribe was the richer group and led by a very influential aristocracy, whose leaders bore the titles of *Baghatur* or *Ba'atur* (valiant), *Noyan* (chief), and *Sechan* (wise). This aristocracy wielded influence over these classes, namely, the warrior or faithful– free men called *Nokud*, the commoners (*Qarachu*), and the slaves (*Bogul*). This category of slaves (*Bogul*) comprised not only of individual slaves but also conquered tribes who became slaves of the victorious one.[65] According to Juvaini, these tribes regarded raiding, violence, immoral activities as deeds that represent manliness.[66]

Among the nomads 'chieftainship' was an important but an adhoc institution based on 'free choice of chief' for the convenience of the tribe to solve their disputes and to act as leaders in case of wars. We also get reference of another institution of

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[62] E.D Phillips, *The Mongols*, p.26.
[63] Cited in Rene Grousset, *The Empire of the Steppes: A History of Central Asia*, p.193.
[64] Ibid; p.194.
[65] Ibid; p.195.
[66] Ata Mulk Juvaini, *Tarikh-i Jahan Gusha*, 1, p.21.

'*anda*' or sworn brotherhood' prevalent in steppe.[67] This particular institution played pivotal role in cementing the bonds between two tribes. This is how Chinggis Khan, secured the support of anda-Jamuqa, who with the passing of time became his archrival.[68] Vladimirtsov and Barthold write that Temuchin (Chinggis) got support of the 'steppe aristocracy' and Jamuqa that of the common people or 'Qarachu'.[69] We also get reference of Chinggis Khan's father Yesugai, who had similar relationship *(anda)* with Toghril (Kerait chief), who helped Chinggis Khan in his difficult times and was respected by the latter as his father. Besides, a band of few men might attach themselves as '*nokut*' or personal followers to a noted chief. These nokuts were helpful than a kinsman, especially to a rising chief who needed follower with absolute devotion towards him.

The chiefs in Mongol society were highly respected and their orders were carried on especially during wars. In normal circumstances, however, we hardly get reference of any interference of chief in the life of people. The promise of submission in battle was taken seriously; and any case of defiance led to confiscation of their wealth obtained from loot and plunder.[70] Within this tradition of independent rule and rulers, the social structure of the tribes had acquired

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[67] D.O Morgan, *The Mongols*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986, pp.59-60; V.V. Barthold, *Four Studies on the History of Central Asia*, V.T. Minorsky tr., 3 vols., Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1956, I, p.32; E.D. Phillips, *The Mongols*, p.27.
[68] Temuchin got separated from Jamuqa due to negative interpretation by his chief wife Bortei of Jamuqa's phrase. For further details see Togen Isenbike. For some scholars the difference of opinion brought their separation. Bortei seems to dislike Jamuqa according to *Secret History*.
[69] Boris I Vladimirtsov, *The Life of Genghis Khan*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1930, p.33.
[70] *The Secret History of the Mongols*, tr. Francis Woodman Cleaves, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982, pp.54-55 & 81-82.

hierarchal form. In normal times, the power of chief was limited, but that power too was seen collectively beonging to the family rather than a personal possession.[71] When a chief died his effective successor might well be from his family who had succeeded in wiping out other contenders.[72] The leaders of these tribes were referred as *Khan* and the tribes were known as *Khanates*. Thus, the steppe people were quite familiar with the titles such as *Khan* and *gur Khan* but the institution of *Khaqan* established by Chinggis Khan was something not known till that time.

Temuchin made his mark as a valiant military commander even though most of his early raids and fighting were either to take revenge from *Tartars* who were responsible fo· the death of his father or from the *merkits* who kidnapped his wife. He exhibited his profound military and political skills, and by exploiting various tribal institutions he was able to get support from many tribes.[73]

Chinggis Khan in spite of all these achievements was considered merely a 'chief'. He became Khaqan, at a later date after a discussion in a Mongol assembly on the problems faced by them. Juzyani writes that after a serious discussion, they came to the conclusion that the absence of a strong ruler was the cause of their

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[71] D.O. Morgan, *The Mongols*, p.40.

[72] J.F Fletcher, "Turco-Mongolian Monarchic Traditions in the Ottoman Empire," *Harvard Ukranian Studies*, 3-4 (1979-80), pp.236-251.

[73] To take revenge of his father's death (for which *Tartars* were responsible), he joined hands with *Keraits*. The basis of this alliance was 'andaship' (a relation which existed between Toghril- *Kerait* leader and his father Yesugai) as already discussed. In due course, Chinggis virtually exterminated the *Tatars*. However, we get instances of individual *Tatars* in his service, for e.g. 'Shigi Qutuqu', who was adopted by Chinggis Khan's mother as her son when his tribe was destroyed.

misfortune.[74] This was probably the *qurultai* of 1206. By this time Chinggis Khan had become famous by his wars and conquests. Thus, all concurred in his name and took an oath and declared Temuchin as their *Khan* with the title of 'Chinggis'.[75]

The *qurultai* of 1206, as already stated, assumes great significance. Not only Temuchin acquired the title of Chinggis Khan and *Khaqan* but also allegedly promulgated *yasa* or *yasaq* which came to be called in English the "Great code of Chinggis Khan" or "Great law of Chinggis Khan." Allegedly, it is this law which formed the basis of rule and provided legitimacy to rulers in Central Asia and was followed so fervently as to match the importance of *shariat* among the Muslim rulers.

Consider the following observation and understanding of the term *siyasa* by the Egyptian historian al-Maqrizi (1364-1442) in his *Kitab al-Khitat*:

> Thoust should know that the public at our time, nay, since the establishment of Mamluk sultanate in Egypt and Syria, is of the opinion that the ordinances of the law (al-ahkam) are divided into two branches: the ordinances of the *shariat* (hukm al- *shariat*) and the ordinances (hukm) of the *siyasa* ......This is the original meaning of *siyasa* in the language. Later it was

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[74] Minhaj-i Siraj Juzyani, *Tabaqat-i Nasiri*, Major H.G Raverty tr., New Delhi: Oriental Books Reprint Co., 1970, Vol.2, p.937.

[75] *The Secret History of the Mongol Dynasty*, Kwei Wei Sun tr., p.88.

> applied to the code which had been formed for the observance of the rules of decency and propriety, of public interest and of good order. There are two kinds of *siyasa*: a just *(adila) siyasa* which punishes duly the criminal oppressor, and which is part of the sacred law (*shariat*). There are people who know it and there are people who do not know it. Numerous books were written on the *siyasa shariat*. The other kind is the iniquitous *siyasa* (*zalima*), which the *shariat* forbids. But the *siyasa* which the people of our time speak has nothing to do with this. It is nothing but a Mongol word, the original form of which is *yasa*, which the people of Egypt distorted by the adding the letter *sin* at its beginning.[76]

What could easily be deduced from the above passage from *Kitab al-Khitat* is that while Maqrizi acknowledges and recognise deviances from *shariat* as a form of *siyasa,* he also affirms that in the fourteenth/fifteenth century this deviance from *shariat* was an attribution of *siyasa.* This was probably the Mongol *yasa*, which obviously ran contrary to the Islamic *shariat*. Thus, the non-*shariat* part of *siyasa*, which according to Maqrizi was initially "applied to the code which had been formed for the observance of the rules of decency and propriety, of public interest and of good order," and which assumingly, was later extended to all temporal

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[76] Cited from David Ayalon, "The Great *Yasa* of Chinggis Khan: A Re-examination (Part A)," *Studia Islamica* 33 (1971), p.105.

issues, was nothing but the Mongolian *yasa*. It is particularly in this context that we have two meaning of *siyasa*: *siyasa al-adila* and *siyasa al-zalima*, the latter applied to the non- *shariat* part, and fantastically over-shadowed with Mongolian *yasa*.[77]

Putting into context the above passage from Maqrizi regarding the alleged corruption of *yasa* into *siyasa*, it is also noticed that the information is apparently prejudiced on the role of *hajibs* (chamberlain) particularly and initially within the Mamluk administrative and political set-up, and later on to other 'Islamic' monarchical set-up. The above passage quoted is from the section entitled "On the office of the *hajib*" from *Kitab al-Khitat* in which Maqrizi's grievances against the intrusion of *hajibs* into the domain of *shariat* is quite obvious. Maqrizi moans over the growing powers of the *hujjabs* resulting in the over-shadowing of *qadis*:

> The *hajibs* nowadays thus judge everybody from amongst the population, be he dignified or humble, and irrespective of whether the case is *Shar'i* or *siyasi* according to their false allegation. If a *qadi* would try to take away a litigant from the court of the *hajib* he would not be able to do so......At the beginning the judgement of the *hajibs* were called the judgements of the *siyasa*. This is a Satanic word the origin of which most people of our time do not know and which they utter negligently, and indifferently, saying: this matter

[77] See William Popper tr. *History of Egypt, 1382-1469 from Arabic Annals of Abdul Mahasin ibn Taghribirdi*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1954.

> is not included in the domain of the *shariat* and constitutes part of the *siyasa* judgement.[78]

Thereafter, Maqrizi explains the meaning and definitions of *siyasa* which was limited to the domain of *shariat*. He also informs us that how initially the juridical matters were tried and decided by the *qadis* in the light of *shariat* and the matters which were not within the domain of *shariat* were left to the *hajibs*. In this sense, the rules of *shariat* were observed and the justice and prosperity prevailed. Maqrizi, thereafter, informs us that this justice and prosperity prevailed until 1403-1404 where after the *hajibs* violated the sacred domains. Maqrizi writes:

> Since the time of afflictions which took place in the year 1403-1404 onwards, the *hajibs* became in numerous and they violated the inviolable and passed a·bitrarily iniquitous judgements, which caused the extinction of light of the true religion.[79]

David Ayalon is of the opinion that the corruption of *yasa* and *siyasa* is probably justified at some points, but he refused to admit that *siyasa* in the context of Islamic polity was restricted only to *yasa*, the laws of the Mongols. What appears from the analysis and discussion on the evolution of Islamic *siyasa* in the

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[78] Cited from David Ayalon, "The Great Yasa of Chinggis Khan: A Reexamination (Part C2)," *Studia Islamica*, Vol.38, 1973, pp.107-108.
[79] Ibid

preceding section makes it abundantly clear that David Ayalon is only partly right. It has already been discussed that the Islamic polity and administration did start to distinguish between the two forms of *siyasa*: one governed by *shariat* (*siyasa al-adila*) and the other which remained out of its precincts. The latter dealt with those issues which might have contradicted *shariat* but were essential to preserve the authority of the ruler, such as inflicting capital punishments on Muslim rebels. With the diminishing of power and authority of the *khailfa,* these two kinds of *siyasa* were tried by the *qadis* and *hajibs* respectively, and it constituted *siyasa* as a whole monolithic block. Up to this point Ayalon appears to be right, but his statement that *siyasa al-zalima,* the non-*shariat* part of *siyasa* was not always the Mongolian *yasa* appears to be far fetched. To be on a safer side, one could well conclude that it might or might not be the case. With the increase in the domain of the judicial as well as administrative matters, the *siyasa* might have incorporated the provisions of *yasa.*

It is quite interesting, to note that Maqrizi is not our only source on *siyasa-yasa* issue. It repeatedly occurs in the sources of the thirteenth and fourteenth century. Ibn Khaldun, for example, replaces the word *yasa* into *siyasa* while copying from al-Umari's passage on Chinggis Khan. Thus, what was *yasa al-Kabira* in al-Umari becomes *siyasa al-Kabira* in the history of Ibn Khaldun. At another place, Ibn Khaldun, speaking on particular adherence of the Mongols of the Chaghtaid kingdom and of Mongol and China to the *yasa* calls it the *siyasa* of Chinggis Khan. Yet another Mamluk historian, Ibn Taghribirdi also calls *siyasa* as nothing but the corruption of the Mongolian word *yasa.*

However, the reasons given both by Ibn Taghribirdi and Maqrizi for the corruption of the *yasa* to *siyasa* are not only insensitive but also not fully reliable. Consider the following reason given by Ibn Taghribirdi:

> Chinggis Khan was the originator of the *Tora* and *yasaq*. *Tora* in the Turkish language is teaching, doctrine, and *yasaq* is the two word phrase *si* and *yasa*. The term *si* is Persian and means three. The term *yasa* is Turkish-Mongolian and means *tartib*. Thus, the whole word means three *tartibs*. The reason for this appealation was that Chinggis Khan divided his Empire into three parts, allotting each part to one of his three sons. At the same time he bequeathed on them commandments from which the Turks do not deviate up to our time, in spite of their great numbers and in spite of their adherence to different religions. And thus they started saying *si-yasa*, namely, the three *tartibs* which Chinggis Khan established. The Turks then omitted the first of the two parts and said *yasa* for a long time. Then they said *yasaq* instead, and this form of the word lasted upto nowadays. The term *siyasa* spread to other realms, and reached even Egypt and Syria. The people of these two countries, however, found it difficult to pronounce that term properly, and they said, instead, *siyasa*, in conformity with the way the Arabs corrupt the words from foreign languages.[80]

[80] Ibid.

Despite the rationales advanced by our historians that question the reliability of their authority on Mongols, besides the oversimplification of the reason of turning the Mongolian *yasa* into *siyasa*, there could be little doubt in asserting that there was at least some connection between the two. *Siyasa* within the Muslim context knew only the *shariat* part and whatever was over and beyond that was only accepted if it was aimed at delivering 'justice', which brings peace and prosperity to the kingdoms. The adherence or even slight borrowing of the system developed by a non-Muslim, like the *yasa* of Chinggis Khan was not only blasphemous but also renders the Muslim who adopts it as heretic and tyrant.

The important point here is the issue of 'justice', particulary in regards to the duties or aims of the ruler, as has already been discussed in the previous section. It is this whole concept of 'justice' within the Islamic concept of *siyasa* that played such an important part in understanding the evolution of the political structure, not only in the administrative set-up of the sixteenth century Mughals of South Asia, but also in the rest of the medieval Muslim monarchies. It is around this concept of 'justice' that two of our issues of prime concern discussed in the previous section find their answer, namely, the purpose of *siyasa*, and the means to attain it. However, before we dwell on this issue of 'justice' at length in next chapter, a brief discussion of the Mongolian *yasa* at this point is quite important because this term was interchangeably used with *siyasa* in our sources.

1.2 The Legend and Veracity of *Yasa-i Chinggisi*

The Mongolian polity as it was adopted in Central Asia was based on 'Great *yasa*' believed to be promulgated by Chinggis Khan. However, during the course of time many Islamic historians confused that code with *siyasa.* Whether Chinggis Khan himself promulgated these laws, what in essence were the basic characteristic features of these laws and whether these laws were written in a form of document has been a matter of much scholarly debate, which is worth re-capping here.

The contents of *yasa-i Chinggisi* and its implications on the polity have been discussed by a number of modern historians and most of them are of the view that Chinggis Khan himself framed them. However, we find no authentic copies of this so-called *yasa* in any of the contemporary sources to prove its originality. In early Chinese works, like the '*Secret History*' and some Persian sources and Travellers' accounts we get a reference of a 'Blue Book' in which the decrees issued were recorded. Similarly, we get reference of *yasa* in a number of contemporary sources, which acted as a binding force on Mongol people.[81] This would mean that the existence of *yasa* in the form in which modern historians considered it is highly doubtful. A fresh examination of the *yasa* and its content seems important before examining the implications of the conclusion drawn on the contents of the *yasa.*

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[81] Rashiduddin Fazlullah refers to Chinggis Khan's code as *yasak.* However, a close study of the details clearly indicates that the reference is about re-establishing of ancient laws with new ones.

The earliest source on *yasa* is Juvaini, the mid-thirteenth century writer who compiled his work about thirty years after Chinggis Khan's death. At the beginning of his very large work, Juvaini has a section entitled, "The Regulations (Qawaid)" which Chinggis Khan set forth after his rise to the power, and the *yasas* (ordinances) which he instituted. In this somewhat rambling chapter, Juvaini tells his readers that Chinggis Khan established a rule for every occasion and a regulation for every circumstance while for every crime he fixed a penalty. Further Juvaini says, Chinggis Khan ordered that these *yasa*s and ordinances were to be written down on scrolls and these scrolls were to be called the Great *yasa* book (*yasanama-i buzurg*). Juvaini never saw, nor does he say he saw, the scroll or scrolls, nor is there any record of anyone else ever having seen them. David Ayalon has taken great pain and has gone into details to prove this.[82] Despite this much of our present day information on *yasa* is based on the evidences provided by Juvaini. Further, Juvaini describe Mongol customs and things which Chinggis Khan prescribed but does not actually say that these were the part of *yasanama-i buzurg*. He prefaces his remarks about them with the reassurance that many of these ordinances are in accordance with the *shariat*, the Muslim law, and among them he includes the hunt, the way in which the personal guard of the *Khan* were organised, how the army was to be inspected, penalties for unauthorised leave, and a system of post and various matters of taxation. He does not say when this *Yasanama-i buzurg* was promulgated or under what circumstances.

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[82] See Ayalon, "The Great Yasa of Chinggis Khan: A Re-examination (Part A)."

With the passage of time other writers borrowed heavily from Juvaini regarding *yasa*, often without acknowledgment and embellished and augmented his not very telling remarks. Not only did the later writers choose to systematise his data into what they imagined the Great *yasa* to be, they also gave a time and place when it was promulgated. This tradition of augmenting and systematising the very scanty and unsystematic evidence of Juvaini found its way into European scholarship in 1710 with the publication of Petis De La Croix's, "History of Genghis Khan", first in French and then twelve years later in English. The author describes the great assembly or *quriltai* of 1206 at which the Mongol Temuchin was given or adopted the title of Chinggis Khan meaning "Oceanic Ruler." Petis De La Croix then goes on to list twenty-two provisions of the *yasa*.[83]

The formulation by Petis De La Croix that Chinggis Khan deliberately promulgated a constitutional code in 1206 pretty much held sway in the scholarly community until the 1970's. De Rachewiltz used Ch'en's work to suggest a very plausible modification of David Morgan's thesis that there was no great code promulgated by Chinggis Khan. The Chinese sources do point clearly to a Great *yasa* which was promulgated according to them in 1229 at the accession of Ogedai and it is De Rachewiltz reasonable contention that Ogedai not only publicly declared that he would uphold his father's decrees or *yasa*s but also formally proclaim in essence a formal promulgation of them.

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[83] As quoted in D.O. Morgan, *The Great Yasa of Chinngis Khan.*.

In the 1970's this formulation of great code with several revisions turned out to be a house of cards that came tumbling down when David Ayalon, a specialist on the history of Egypt in the Mamluk period began a critical examination of the sources on the *yasa*. In a series of articles, he showed that all the Islamic sources, Persian and Arabic alike had come from the section from Juvaini cited above with the addition of their own imaginative creations. In an article published in 1986, David Morgan took Ayalon's work a step further to raise the question about the very existence of a great *yasa* of Chinggis Khan.[84] Juvaini certainly refers to *Yasanama-i buzurg* but gives no evidence of having seen them. The Mongol *Secret History* written about 1230 is another source for *yasa* but it makes no mention of such a code. It is indeed surprising, as both Ayalon and Morgan points out that a work so important to Chinggis Khan and his successors should have left out any reference to such a code. It does, however, make several uses of the word *yasa* in the following contexts, as a rulers directive, as a legally binding precedent and as normative law the infringement of which entails usually severe capital punishment.

David Morgan also suggests that there was undoubtedly a body of unwritten Mongol customary law.[85] Juvaini says that Mongol youths learned reading and writing from the Uighurs, in order to draw up the code of the *yasa* or to codify Mongol laws, whose observance was not only obligatory on the inhabitants of the

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[84] See D.O. Morgan, *The Great Yasa of Chinggis Khan*.
[85] D.O Morgan, *The Mongols*, pp.98-99.

empire but also on *Khaqans* themselves.[86] This leaves us with no doubt that *yasa* in some form (oral); were codified by Chinggis Khan by whose efforts Mongol learnt reading and writing from the Uighurs.

The exact date of the codification of *yasa* was not known but it is commonly assumed that Chinggis probably codified them at the *qurultai* of 1206.[87] Petis de-la Croix in his '*Historic Du Genghizcan*' published in 1710, gives the description of *qurultai* in which Chinggis Khan declared that he thought "to add some laws to the already existing ones" which he desired and commanded his people to observe.[88] On the basis of the evidences cited above, we can safely assume that *yasa-i Chinggisi* comprised of existing laws as well as laws framed by Chinggis Khan himself. The only thing that can be attributed to Chinggis Khan would be its codification in a proper and ordered form and kept in a treasury for consultation on all-important matters.

As regards to the contents of the *yasa*, a study of Juvaini and other sources reveals that it discusses the matters related to state-craft, administration, army organisation, warfare, social life and etiquettes in which old Turko-Mongol

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[86] Ata Mulk Juvaini, *Tarikh-i Jahan Gusha,* I, p. 25.
[87] D. O. Morgan, "The Great Yasa of Chinggis Khan and Mongol Law in the Il-Khanate," *Bulletin of School of Oriental and African studies,* 49 (1986), pp.163-76.
[88] See Rene Grousset, *The Empire of the Steppes: A History of Central Asia*; Patricia Crone writes that when a new steppe empire is inaugurated, the conqueror will usually mark the foundation of his polity by the promulgation of laws (*Slave on Horses*, p.20).

customs were preserved.[89] Chinggis Khan entrusted the supervision of certain important matters to 'Shigi Qutugu' (a *Tatar* and adopted brother of Chinggis) and also gave him power of judgement over all his people and made him chief judge.[90] He also asked him to note all the decisions related to the distribution of booty and wealth; and also to record the judicial matter in a '*koko debter*' (blue register). It was further ordered that anyone who changes it should be guilty. The most important thing to be noticed is that the word *yasa* was not used, though it appears in the book in the form of 'order' or 'decree'. We also find that Shigi Qutugu was entrusted with the judicial matters and the distribution of inhabitants among the Mongol royal house.[91] This apparently had nothing to do with general legal code; in fact they were the "orders" and "commands" to solve various disputes.

Prof. Cleaves gives a new direction to the whole controversy of the *yasa* by attributing it to Ogedei rather than to Chinggis Khan on the basis of information collected from Chinese sources.[92] Juvaini further complicates the issue by saying that Chaghtai was chosen by his father to administer and enforce *yasa-wa siyasat* (rules and regulations laid down for political set up) not the great *yasa* of Chinggis Khan.[93] This statement of Juvaini indicates that *yasa* continued to evolve and were not only regulations which were issued by Chinggis Khan. Juzyani is of the view

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[89] Ata Mulk Juvaini, *Tarikh-i Jahan Gusha*, 1, pp.23-34; *The Secret History of the Mongol Dynasty*, Kei Wei Sun tr., pp.22-23.
[90] D.O Morgan, *The Mongols*, p.97.
[91] Ata Mulk Juvaini, *Tarikh-i Jahan Gusha*,1, pp.23-34
[92] F.W Cleaves, "The Fifteen Palace Poems," *Historical Journal of Asiatic Society*, 20, 1957.
[93] Ata Mulk Juvaini, *Tarikh-i Jahan Gusha*,1, p.40. Juvaini further complicates the issue by saying that Chaghtai was chosen by his father to administer and enforce *yasa wa-siyasat*.

that these *ahkams*[94] were actually *hukms* and *farmans* which were referred as *yasa* by the Mongols.[95] Thus, it becomes quite clear that these *yasas* were actually decrees issued on specific issues from time to time. For instance-decrees issued after assuming the position of *Khaqan*. It has already been discussed that *yasa*s existed much before the advent of Chinggis Khan. The important question here is to examine whether these *yasa* or *yasas* were followed by Chinggis and his successors and to what extent?

Ogedei Khan, after his accession, first of all made a *yasa* that such ordinance and commands as had previously been issued by Chinggis Khan should be complied.[96] Further, Juvaini refers to the second *Qurultai* in which Ogedei Khan before setting up for the conquest of Khitai called a council to confirm the old and new *yasa*s and Ordinances.[97] Guyuk Khan also after his accession, made *yasa* that just as previous *Khan* at the time of his accession, had upheld the *yasa*s of his father, i.e., Chinggis Khan without any change; in the same manner his own father's (Ogedei's) *yasa* should be kept immune from the contingencies of redundancy and deficiency.[98] Moreover, when Ogedei was elected *Khan* in 1229 one of the first problems confronting him was the dispute over a plundering expedition despatched

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[94] He referred to Chinggis Khan's prohibition of telling lies, committing adultery, washing hands in running water and so forth.

[95] Juzyani, *Tabaqat-i Nasiri*, 2, p. 1108.

[96] Ata Mulk Juvaini, *Tarikh-i Jahan Gusha*, 1, p. 189.

[97] Ibid, 1, p.196.

[98] Ibid., p.256.

by Tolui during the interregnum, without authorisation by all the princes.[99] Ogedei in accordance with his nature settled it in customary fashion, promulgated *yasa* by which past offences were pardoned and forgotten.[100] These instances make it abundantly clear that *yasas* were 'edicts' or 'decrees' issued by 'Mongol' rulers keeping in view the old 'Turko-Mongol tradition'. It was the existing custom of steppe society to promulgate *yasas*, which was followed by Chinggis Khan and his successors. It can be safely assumed that the *yasa* was a gradually evolving body of custom or traditions that started developing long before the rise of Chinggis Khan and even continued long after him.

The above references make it clear that new *yasas* continued to be promulgated by later Great Khan's but the *yasas* made by Chinggis Khan were also retained. Moreover, interesting thing to note is that no where we get reference of keeper of *yasa*; Shiqi Qutugu was *yarghuchi* and it may be possible that his decisions were records kept in records to solve cases of further generations.[101] Thus, it is quite clear from the above discussion that Mongols followed some kind of regulations for carrying out administration and the observance of social etiquettes before Chinggis Khan came to power in oral form which was later on codified by him, and it seems that the codified version was *yasa*.

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[99] Peter Jackson, "The Dissolution of the Mongol Empire," *Central Asiatic Journal*, 22, 1978, p. 197.

[100] Rashid al-Din, *The Successor of Genghis Khan*, pp.32-33.

[101] D. O. Morgan, *The Mongols*, p. 99.

In the preceding pages references have been cited in which several Chinggisid princes remarked that they strictly followed the *yasa* of Chinggis Khan. It seems that this position was only theoretical since in actual practice the same Chinggisid princes on certain occasion deviated from the established traditions. For example, Chinggis Khan defied the *yasa* or old Mongol tradition by nominating Ogedei Khan (his third son) as his successor. Although, Juvaini clearly mentions that according to *yasa* only deceased Khan's youngest son by his chief wife could succeed.[102] Secondly, *yasas* continued to be promulgated by a number of Chinggisid rulers, which again suggests that Chinggis Khan's *yasas* were not the only regulations followed by these rulers. Thirdly, in one of Chinggis Khan's *yasa* it was explicitly mentioned that only rulers will be addressed by the title of *Khan* or *qaan* and all other members of the royal family, however, important they may be, will be addressed by their proper names only.[103] Thus, the title of *Khaqan* or *qaan* was reserved for those who become rulers but his brothers and relatives were to be called simply by their proper names. But we came across several instances where deviations from this law are noticed. For instance Batu, the eldest son of Jochi, was referred as *Khan* despite the fact that he was not the ruler.[104] Similiarly, Ogedei nominated his grandson, Shiremun, as his successor[105] who was described as *T'ai-Tseu* (Prince Imperial) – a title reserved for the heir apparent but his claims

[102] Ata Mulk Juvaini, *Tarikh-i Jahan Gusha*, 2, p.549.
[103] Ibid, 1, pp. 26-27; Spuler Bertold, *The History of the Mongols*, Tr. by Helga and Stuart Drummond, Berkely: California University Press, 1972, p. 40.
[104] Mansura Haider, "The Sovereign in the Timurid State," *Turcica*, vol.8, no.2, 1976, p.77.
[105] Rashid al-Din, *The Successor of Genghis Khan*. pp.120, 180 and 201.

got no consideration and Guyuk Khan ascended the throne with the help of his mother Toregene Khatun. This was yet another instance of the open violation of Chinggis Khan's *yasa*. Qublai Khan made war on his brother Esan Buqa (an heir for the throne) after the death of the Great Khan Mangu Khan in 1259. Moreover, he became *Khaqan* without the consent of the royal family. This act was also contrary to traditions established by Chinggis Khan, which required the whole family to participate in the election of its head.

The important element that needs to be highlighted and focussed upon here is the one that had already been introduced by Juvaini in 1260, and is central to the tension over the evolution of *siyasa* concept as well as to the legacy of *yasa*. This is what we called the "old Sharia of the Arabs", the Islamic way or Islamic law, obedience to and regard for which is the touchstone in literary sources of the justice and goodness of a ruler. In the 1260's, when Juvaini said that these ordinances of Chinggis Khan were in harmony with the *shariat* he wanted his readers to know that the regulations were the regulations of a good ruler. Here, however, Qashani wants his readers to understand that the *yasa* of Chinggis Khan is antithetical to the *shariat*, its adherents are Islam's enemies, and its enemies are Islam's heroes. This particular dichotomy, that is between *yasa* and *shariat*, and its relation to the two forms of *siyasa*— that is *al-adil and al-zalim* converges only on one form, which is 'justice'. This issue of 'justice' in itself defines the 'legitimacy' of a ruler and the basic purpose of his rule, and formed a pivotal part in the fourteenth and fifteenth century concept of *siyasa* or medieval polity as will be discussed in the next chapter.

1.3 The Succession Crisis: Legitimacy and *Siyasa* after Chinggis Khan

Even if Chinggis Khan was able to promulgate a quasi legislative code (*yasa*) binding on all the Central Asian people of his times, and if some secondary works are to be considered, for all times, it remains an interesting proposition to see and examine the situation of his legacy in legitimizing the succession of his male family members, especially his sons, over a massive conquered area as well as on overwhelmingly nomadic people after his death in 1227. The Mongol tribal laws acknowledged the suzerainty of the tribe who elected its leader, while conquered area remained the property of the whole family. Some scholars are of the view that Chinggis Khan divided his conquered areas among his four sons, while others conclude that he nominated Ogedei, his third son against the tribal laws which recognised succession by the youngest son from the chief wife.[106] These principles and laws were already in conflict with the law of primogeniture whereby Chinggis eldest son Jochi should have inherited his father's original seat (*ordo*).

There existed enough contradictions in the issues of succession and inheritance. It is evident from the fact that all the four sons of Chinggis Khan, namely, Jochi, Chaghtai, Ogedei and Tolui had estranged relationship even before the death of Chinggis Khan. The conquest of Khwarizm in 1221 had been impeded by a quarrel between his two elder sons, Jochi and Chaghtai, and after the fall of its

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[106] See Ata Mulk Juvaini, *Tarikh-i Jahan Gusha*, 2, p.549.

capital Urgench in that year, they, together with Ogedei, are alleged to have tried to withhold from their father his share of the plunder.[107] On the basis of such information some scholars have concluded that the Central Asian polity as bequeathed by Chinggis Khan rendered the position of sovereign extremely weak.[108]

While reserving the judgement on such conclusion, one might simply refer to the antiquated Persian Sassanian kingship practices, noted as one of the strongest, and which inevitably were incorporated from time to time by different rulers across time and space. Despite known for strong and well rooted position of sovereign as well as, succession, Sassanian Empire was also not free from the succession wars. After the death of Shapur I and the brief reign of his eldest son Hormizd-Ardashir, two other sons of Shapur, Bahram and Narseh contended for the throne. It is quite significant to note that the throne passed to Bahram, that is, to the senior member of the clan and not the son of Hormizd-Ardashir. Later on as a result of bitter conflict among the group of nobles at the court and in particular through the efforts of high priest, Kartir, who strove to put his own protégé on the throne in disregard of the family law the Sassanian throne was given to Bahram's son, Bahram-II, by passing the claim of the senior member of the family, Narseh. This led to a revolt

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[107] The estrangement in relationship and the conflict is mentioned alone by Juvaini. See Ibid., 2, p.549.

[108] This has been a conclusion by majority of the historians of Mughal South Asia. See Mansura Haider, "The Mongol Traditions and Their Survival in Central Asia (XIV - XV Centuries)," *Central Asiatic Journal,* 28, 1984; Khan, "The Turko-Mongol Theory of Kingship"; Tripathi, "The Turko-Mongol Theory of Kingship."

raised by Narseh in 293, after Bahram's death, under the banner of legitism for the restoration of the throne to its lawful occupant.[109]

The opposite situation occurred in the second period of crisis, at the end of the 70's of the fourth century after the death of Shapur-II. The eldest of the clan, Ardshir-II, came to the throne, but Shapur-II's son, Shapur-III, who took Ardshir-II's place hastened to proclaim, in inscriptions, the 'legitimacy' of his rule and the whole event. At a later date, of great significance was the struggle for the throne that took place in the stormy period of the revolt led by Bistam, who was connected with the ruling clan, but in the maternal line.

These three examples clearly state that despite having a sound and strong theory and practice of centralisation and 'sovereignty, the Sassanian Empire witnessed succession revolts, mainly under the banner of 'legitimacy' to rule. The same kinds of incidents are repeated again, at a much later period from Ottoman Empire, where the ruler was regarded as Caliph, at least from the time of Sulaiman I.[110] What is noteworthy, from these instances is the fact that all the banner of revolt in the succession during Sassanian period, or as matter of general fact, were raised in the name of 'legitimacy'. Thus, if the same crisis appeared after the death of a strong ruler like Chinggis Khan, one needs to probe further in to the finer nuances

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[109] The court party was trying to put Bahram-II's son, Bahram-III on the throne. For details see V.G. Lukonin, "Political, Social and Administrative Institutions: Taxes and Trade," in *The Cambridge History of Iran* ,Cambridge, 1968.

[110] For a good understanding of the succession crisis and politics in the Ottoman Empire, see Jane Hathaway, *The Politics of Households in Ottoman Egypt: The Rise of the Qazdaglis*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997; Peirce, *Imperial Harem.*

of the nature of Mongol polity rather then simplifying the conclusions on the basic tribal laws.

A closer study of the Mongol polity during its early period reveals two startling facts. First during the entire span of Chinggis Khan, most of his army and population remained nomadic, thus requiring large grazing fields for the sustenance of that army. Secondly, acquisition of large conquered areas necessitated a sedentary mode of policies, which might not work in conformity to the Mongol tribal laws of inheritance. Also, the military combats in the west brought Mongols closer to the Islamic system of rule and its theoretical perspectives on the legitimacy of its ruler/leader. Thus, in order to succeed to Chinggis Khan's Empire, his four sons should fulfil one or all of the criteria in order to pose themselves as his legitimate successor. Now let us examine the position of the four sons of Chinggis Khan in regard to legitimate succession at the death of the latter. Firstly, as per the tribal laws by virtue of being the youngest son, Tolui could pose as a legitimate successor. Secondly, by virtue of being the eldest, Jochi was also a legitimate successor. Chinggis Khan willed his throne to Ogedei, the third in line who could also claim legitimacy to rule on the basis of the "will" of the preceding ruler. Lastly, Chaghtai could also claim the throne on the basis of his strict adherence to the *yasa* of Chinggis Khan, which also provided him 'legitimacy' to rule.

Thus, as is evident from above on the death of Chinggis Khan all of his four sons were equally well placed to succeed. This was a dangerous predicament, since it ensured high politics, parties and factions within the ruling elites. The history

from the Islamic lands proved that during such times 'legitimacies' are and could be manufactured, thus ensuring rise in the status of priestly and military leaders. The priestly class, in particular were extremely important agent in manufacturing legitimacy, especially if it had to be elevated to a divine status. Chinggis Khan had himself resorted to this manufacturing despite his military and political genius.[111] This is exactly what happened after the death of Chinggis Khan. Since all of his sons perceived themselves as legitimate successors to Chinggis Khan, the politics and struggle was just inevitable.

The claims of Jochi (before the death of Chinggis Khan) as a legitimate successor were being challenged by his own brothers. It is most likely that what underlay Jochi's disturbed relations with his younger brothers was his own questionable 'legitimacy'. He had been born soon after his mother's release from the captivity of Chinggis Khan's enemies, the *merkits*, and therefore, his parentage was always questioned. Rashid al-din writes that Jochi was taunted with the circumstances of his birth by his younger brothers. It is because of this nefarion propaganda that despite being eldest and well-qualified, neither Jochi (who predeceased his father), nor his son Batu were able to claim the throne.

[111] The high priest of Chinggis Khan, Gokchu elevated his position to a divine status. Here also, he seems to have spread the idea (thereafter held by his descendants) that Chinggis conquests fulfilled a pre-ordained destiny. Rene Grousset, apart from political calculations, a certain religious factor was present to favour this election, which by him is borne out by the declaration of shaman Gokchu, who actively supported Chinggis Khan. Ghurchi said, "Heaven and earth after consultation have appointed Temuchin to be the Lord of dominion. I am carrying this power to him." See Rene Grousset, *The Empire of the Steppes: A History of Central Asia.*

The will of Chinggis Khan, however, was finally upheld when after a period of two years of his death, Ogedie in the *qurultai* of 1229 was finally elected as *Khan.* But after Ogedie's death in 1241, there was a period of regency of another five years. These two intervals of regency in between saw a steep rise in the powers of the nobility. It also witnessed rise in the power of the priestly class, which by this time also included Islamic clergy. A precedent was thus set in motion where not only every surviving member of the deceased 'sovereign' could hope to attain sovereignty, but even a member of the ruling elites could also by manufacturing one could attain that position. The principle of 'legitimacy' to rule acquired new meanings after the death of Chinggis Khan in the *siyasa.* It became a necessary obligation for a claimant to prove his 'legitimacy'. This was easier for a surviving male off-springs for they claimed their 'legitimacy' on the basis of 'royal blood', but it was not difficult either for any military genius, like Timur who could get the 'legitimacy' manufactured, as will be discussed in detail in the subsequent section.

CHAPTER-TWO

'Legitimacy' and Legacy Paradigms: The Evolving *Siyasa* Structure

It has been discussed in Introduction as well as in the previous chapter as to how and why the issue of 'legitimacy' of the ruler or a ruling house gradually constituted an important issue in medieval politics or *siyasa*, and what role it played in defining and managing politics. Early *shariat* legitimacy' to rule, being grounded in the office of caliph was challenged quite early by the dynastic monarchies and *sultanates*. Later, it received its death blow with the onset of military and political career of Chinggis Khan but not before it set the issue of personal/dynastic legacy as 'legitimacy' to rule and govern. This was a paradigm shift in the notions of *siyasa*. An attempt will be made in this chapter to explore this particular issue of 'legitimacy' vis-a-viz legacy, its conflict as well as harmonisation in defining the structure of medieval *siyasa* after the death of Chinggis Khan and also during the time of Timur.

2.1 'Legitimacy' and *Siyasa* under Timur

How strongly the issue of 'legitimacy' figured in *siyasa* after the death of Chinggis Khan has been documented in previous sections. However, this 'legitimacy' could also be easily manufactured not only by the surviving members of the ruler and prominent nobles, but also by the clergy. Thus, during fourteenth century when

the Chinggisid Empire was divided into a number of confederacies *(ulus)*, it became quite easy for Timur, a valiant military leader to assume the status of 'sovereign', if not through titles then definitely through practical working.

Timur or Tamerlane who rose to power, about a century after Chinggis Khan on the ruins of the Mongol world was a native of Tranoxiana, the heart land of Chaghtai ulus (confederation of Chinggis' second son). Born in 1336 in the Barlas tribe, Timur was a descendant of a commander in Chinggis Khan's army. The old Chaghtai *Khanate* by this time was split into two – Transoxiana and Moghulistan, under different branches of the royal family.[112]

The Mongol empire fell into pieces much before Timur's rise. However, the turbulent chiefs continued to owe their allegiance to the Chinggisid race allegedly according to the law of *yasa.*[113] Almost every *amir* maintained a tame Chinggisid Khan in his province to prevent rebellion, being essential to legitimize once rule and to sanctify kingdom by Chinggisid law. Such strong was the legacy of Chinggis Khan.

Hence, if Timur had to legitimize his rule he had to devise ways to link himself to Chinggissid line. Besides, to strengthen his position, he had also to satisfy the *ulemas* and other different powerful groups.

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[112] Grousset, *The Empire of the Steppes: A History of Central Asia*, p.342.
[113] M. Prawdin, *The Mongol Empire: Its Rise and Legacy*, Eden and Cedar Paul tr, London: George & Unwin Ltd., 1940, p. 412.

After assuming power, therefore, Timur raised his own candidate to the dignity of *Khan*; firstly Suyurghatmish (1370-88) and then his son Mahmud (1388-1403).[114] Being conscious of his weak position, Timur used to take *Khan* along with him to avoid any risk of political upheaval. Besides, he established matrimonial relations with the Chinggisid family too. Timur's chief wife Saray Mulk Khanam was the daughter of *Khan* (Chaghtai), of Mawarannahr. He afterwards got married to Tavakkul Khanam, a royal maiden by Khizr Khwaja Khan (a Chinggisid).[115] He even married the mother of Suyurghatmish (Khan)—his puppet *Khan*.[116] He also married the daughter of Qamaruddin (the Mongol King) to safeguard his interests, as he was his neighbour. According to Ibn Arab Shah, both of them use to follow the same religion (i.e. the laws of Chinggis Khan).[117] He adopted the title *gurgen* (son-in-law) to legitimize his position as a ruler and to provide legitimacy to his dynasty. He also married his sons in Chinggisid family and the title *gurgen* repeatedly appears in his coins.[118] Still he was unsure of his position because he did not belong to royal family. Therefore, he too showed his close connection with the Chinggisid family by claiming that his ancestor 'Qarachar' was Chaghtai's 'chief advisor', the latter being the most

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[114] Barthold, *Four Studies on the History of Central Asia*, 2, p.25; M. Prawdin, The Mongol Empire: Its Rise and Legacy, p.438.
[115] Mirza Haider Dughlat, *Tarikh-i Rashidi*, E.D Ross tr, Patna: Academicia, 1973, p.52; Barthold, *Four Studies on the History of Central Asia*, 2, p.25 &31.
[116] See Ibn Khaldun, *Ibn Khaldun and Tamerlane*, Walter J. Fischel tr, Berkeley: California University Press,1952. Also see Syed Jamaluddin, "Political Significance of the Matrimonial Alliances of Amir Timur," *Proceedings of Indian History Congress*, 1978, pp.915-923.
[117] Ahmad Ibn Arab Shah, *Tamerlane or Timur The Great Amir*, J.H Saunders tr., London: Luzac & Co., 1936, p.18.
[118] Lane Poole, *The Coinage of Bukhara* (Transoxiana in the British Museum), London: 1882, pp.28-29.

favoured son of Chinggis Khan and preserver of *yasa*; 'Qarachar' apparently was given the charge of matters related to state-craft, which automatically made him (Timur) responsible for *yasa.* Adoptions of modest titles like *amir, kalan, buzurg* etc. were also a step in this direction for which Timur not only gave justification to his people, but also pushed the argument beyond his jurisdiction.[119] Ibn Arab Shah writes:

> He entitled himself with Timur, the Great Amir, although under his sway were ruler and subject alike; and he Khan, was in bondage like a centipede in mud; and he was like the Khalifs of the time in regard of the sultans.[120]

Throughout his career, Timur used and emphasized the 'legitimacy' of the Chaghtaid house and his followers too continued this tradition to identify themselves as upholder of *Chinggisid* order. But this was not sufficient for one to continue in power. Therefore, he tried to attract the loyalty of *ulus* and to act as a 'sovereign' and made government entirely dependent on him, which afterwards became one of the causes for the decline of the Timurid Empire soon after his death. He even declared himself as continuator and heir of Chinggis Khan and

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[119] Khaldun, *Ibn Khaldun and Tamerlane*, pp.444-445.
[120] Arab Shah, *Tamerlane or Timur: The Great Amir*, p.13.

Chaghtai but also at the same time kept puppet Chinggisid to legitimize his rule. In 1388, he clearly adopted the title of *sultan*.[121]

Timur was able to create charismatic inspiration not only on the Turko-Mongol world but also in Islamic sphere. As Barthold observes, "The Empire created by Timur was a unique combination of the Turko-Mongolian political and military system with the elements of Muslim, mainly Persian culture."[122] R.P Tripathi is also of the view that Timur's theory of kingship was the blending of Turko-Mongolian traditions.[123] It is said that such an assumption holds various lacunae as it is yet to be fully established that to what extent these traditions were on the Timurid structure.[124] By thirteenth century, Mongols including Chaghtaids had embraced Islam.[125] Later, by the turn of the century, the Chaghtaids began to regard themselves as *Turks* while still claiming the title and lineage of Chaghtai descendants of Chinggis.[126] Timur was proud to call himself a *Turk* than *Mongol* even for his ancestors.[127] Prawdin remarks, "Tamerlane's dream was to be a new, Moslem Jenghiz Khan."[128]

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[121]Grousset, *The Empire of the Steppes: A History of Central Asia.*, p.416.
[122] Barthold, *Four Studies on the History of Central Asia*, 2, p.1.
[123] R.P Tripathi, *Some Aspects of Muslim Administration*, Allahabad: Central Book Depot,1978, p.8.
[124] Khan, "The Turko-Mongol Theory of Kingship," pp.3-4.
[125] Dughlat, *Tarikh-i Rashidi*, p.22.
[126] Husain Yusuf, *Two studies in Early Mughal History*, Shimla: Shimla Institute of Advanced Study, 1976, pp.5-6.
[127] Ibid., p.6.
[128]Prawdin, *The Mongol Empire: Its Rise and Legacy*, p.438.

This was not the only method deployed by him to become a new Chinggis Khan. Timur also tried to show heavenly support and his lineage with men of renowned stature. In an interview with Ibn Khaldun, Timur told that his mother was a descendant of *Manuchehr* (a Persian hero).[129] Ibn Arab Shah suggested that she was a descendant of Chinggis Khan.[130] According to *Malfuzat-i Timuri* Timur emphasized heavenly favour. However, some scholars raised doubt over the authenticity of *Malfuzat*.[131] But this fact of divine or heavenly support can be seen in the accounts of Ibn Arab Shah. Timur, according to him, even dated the beginning of divine support from one of the lowest period of his early career in which he received wound in the raid in Sistan.[132] It is very clearly mentioned in Ibn Arab Shah that when Timur was born, his hands were full of fresh blood.[133] Ibn Arab Shah's remarks are noteworthy as it shows his similarity with Chinggis Khan, who allegedly was born with blood in his fists too. Like Chinggis Khan, Timur also claimed some supernatural powers for himself. Timur once remarked to his companions:

> My grand mother, who was skilled in augury and divination, saw in sleep a vision, which she expounded

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[129] Khaldun, *Ibn Khaldun and Tamerlane*, p.2.
[130] Arab Shah, *Tamerlane or Timur: The Great Amir*, p.37.
[131] It is said that the document is written during the time of Shah Jahan in the sixteenth century. If it is so, then also one thing is clear that the political set up of central Asia during seventeenth century is like that and the traditions of the fourteenth century continued until its compilation and thereafter.
[132] Arab Shah, *Tamerlane or Timur: The Great Amir*, p.5.
[133] Ibid, p.1.

> as foreshadowing to her one among her sons and grandsons, who would conquer territories and bring men into subjection and be the Lord of the age. And I am that man and now fit time has came is at hand and came near. Pledge yourselves therefore to my back, arm, flanks and hands and never desert me. [134]

By this prophecy, Timur tried to show himself as divine being and even took the oath in the same pattern as taken by Chinggis. His claims of divine favour carry out an echo of Chinggisid divine claims, that is, Timur claimed to have ascended to heaven on a ladder, which appeared from the sky.[135] In *Tarikh-i Rashidi* also, Timur's dreams were seen as a gift of prophecy after which his fortunes multiplied.[136]

Various instances can be cited in reference to his Islamic inclinations. Barthold is of the opinion that *shariat* was used by Timur to gain his political goal.[137] He styled his puppet *Khan* as an Islamic monarch (*Padshah-i Islam*). He was very generous towards the descendants of Prophet (the *Sayyids*) and *ulemas*. Barthold observes, "Apart from Timur's own descendants, the Sayyids were perhaps the only people in Timur's kingdom whose life was regarded as inviolate."[138] To consolidate his power he developed friendship with the religious groups and

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[134] Arab Shah, *Tamerlane or Timur: The Great Amir*, pp.4-5, 14.
[135] Ibid., pp.4-5.
[136] Dughlat, *Tarikh-i Rashidi*, p.23.
[137] Barthold, *Four Studies on the History of Central Asia*, 2, p.22.
[138] Ibid.

personages.[139] Whatever be his aim one thing is clear that he used *shariat* to solve cases. The contemporary sources suggest considerable influence of Islam on Timur. He wrote a letter to the Sultan of Herat, which began with a saying of Prophet.[140] Another example, which could be cited here, is that Timur and Amir Husayn had taken an oath to keep their friendship eternal in the name of the blessed spirit of Shaikh Shamsuddin Kular.[141] Moreover, when their relations were strained Amir Husayn sent Khizr Khazandar to Timur along with the same copy of *Quran* on which they had previously taken oath of friendship.[142] On another occasion he sought the help of '*Ulema* and *Mashaikhs*'[143] through which peace was ensured between them. It is said that he conferred great authority on Sayyid Barka by appointing him Governor, and even gave hereditary privileges to him and his successors.[144] Before his final encounter with Amir Husayn, Timur asked for the blessings of Sayyid Baraka.[145] Timur acknowledged Sayyid Baraka's aid for his success.[146] After his success over him, Timur sought an oath of adherence from the Turkish *amirs* in the presence of the *Sayyids*.[147] In India, he met Shaikh Farid Ganj-i Shakar.[148] Timur regarded himself as a "soldier of Allah,

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[139] Mansura Haider, "Timur's Religious Policy," *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 1976, p.426.
[140] Arab Shah, *Tamerlane or Timur: The Great Amir*, p.20.
[141] Dughlat, *Tarikh-i Rashidi*, p.28.
[142] S.A Yazdi *Zafarnamah*, ed. Muhammad Abbasi, 2 volumes, sh.1357/1957, Tehran, 1, p.123.
[143] Ibid; p.167.
[144] Arab Shah, *Tamerlane or Timur: The Great Amir*, p.15.
[145] Ibid., p.194.
[146] Ibid., p. 20.
[147] Ibid., p.210.
[148] Ibid., pp.25-27.

created out of his wrath."[149] In Persian sources, Timur was depicted as a "shadow of the Almighty." Even considerable influence was exerted by the *ulemas* in the matters of state and religion. During Timur's reign, *ulemas* held different offices, and sometimes guided him to "spare the citizens of the conquered areas from plunder and massacre."[150] He encouraged his *amirs* to give patronage to *ulemas* and others brought from the conquered Muslim lands.[151] It is also alleged that every day after administrative business, the learned men used to assemble in his presence to have discussions over issues of *shariat.*

Timur is also said to have carried a portable mosque in all his campaigns.[152] Yazdi in his *Zafarnama* depicts Timur as extremely religious and God fearing person. It is clearly mentioned, in one of the inscriptions of his palace, that the kingdom belongs to God and he is the shadow of God on earth. Yazdi, however, adds that in marriage ceremonies after the religious part was over, they used to have feasts according to the Mongol custom in which wine and drinks were openly served. Otherwise in daily life, for enforcement of *shariat* there were *muhtasib.*[153] The

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[149]Ibid., p.91.
[150] Ibid., pp.312-313.
[151] Ibid., pp.161-162.
[152] Ruv Gonzalez de Clavijo, *Narrative of the Spanish Embassy to the Court of Timur at Samarqand in theYears 1403-1406*, Guy Le Strange tr, London: Broadway Travellers Series, 1928, p.272.
[153] Husain Yusuf, *TwoStudies in Early Mughal History*, p.17.

drinking habit of women is also mentioned.[154] This shows contradictions on his part as far as Islamic laws were concerned.

2.2 The Chinggisid Legacy and 'Legitimacy' to Rule

If during the time of Timur *shariat* became an important tool for legitimizing the rule of a ruler, and also for obtaining the vital support of the religious class, one might wonder what had become of that position of the legacy of Chinggis Khan that previously provided legitimacy to rule. Interestingly, we find that *yasa* was not totally in vogue. Our sources fortunately points towards number of examples to prove that Chinggissid customs, including *yasa* were instrumental in providing 'legitimacy', in framing laws and in governance too.

We can notice in this context, the use of Chinggisid titles like *beg, bahadur, noyan,* and the administrative terminology such as *tumen, qoshun,* and the offices, like that of *darugha.*[155] Besides this, the Chinggisid traditions and methodology of government spread far beyond the frontiers of Mongol Empire. Not just the sons of the deceased *Khan*, but also by his brothers, uncles, cousins, nephews, and other relations could inherit the chieftainship from the line of Chaghtaids, like other Chinggisid dynasties with considerable influences on the tribes.[156] Of course,

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[154] Ibid, p.18.

[155] For further details see Zahiruddin Babar, *Babarnama (Memoirs of Babar)*, Annette Susannah Beveridge tr., London: Luzac & Co., 1922; Dughlat, *Tarikh-i Rashidi.*

[156] For more details, see Juvaini, *Tarikh-i Jahan Gusha*; Husain Yusuf, *Two Studies in Early Mughal History.*

there are some exceptional references; for instance Timur raised Suyurghatmish to the position of Mongol *Khan* who happened to be Ogedeyid rather than Chaghtaid.[157] The keeping of puppet *Khan* was not an innovation of Timur. Before him Mongols too were raised to this position, being considered as legitimate heir of the throne. Qazaghan after gaining power on Chaghtai *ulus* maintained a Chinggisid puppet *Khan* to establish the legitimacy of his rule in 1346-47[158] who was later on put to death by Qazaghan, and Buyun Quli became new *Khan* (Chaghtayid). His son Abdullah killed his father's *Khan,* Buyun Quli Khan and made new *Khan* of his choice. Even he tried to build Samarqand as his capital, which cost him with his position and life, succeeded Qazaghan. In 1358, Hajji Beg Barlas installed Buyun Suldus as an *amir* of the ulus after killing 'Abdallah and his kins. Taking advantage of such political crisis and instability Tughlaq Timur, a descendant of Chaghtai Khan and the *Padishah* of *Jete,*[159] led an invasion to Transoxiana in March 1360.

Tughlaq Timur who was raised to the position of *Khaqan* was very much inclined towards Islam. Once he encountered a *Shaikh* while hunting and was impressed by him, promising that if he will ever become *Khan*, he will become *Mussalman* if the

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[157] Grousset, *The Empire of the Steppes: A History of Central Asia.*, p.343; Beatrice Forbes Manz, "Tamerlane and the Symbolism of Sovereignty," *Iranian studies,* 21, 1988. Persian sources are silent about this and only refer to the appointment of *Khan*, as restoration of Chinggisid order.
[158] According to the Mongol tradition only the descendants of Chinggis Khan could adopt the title of *Khan*, and aspire to become sovereign. It seems because of this Qazaghan contended himself with the title of *'beg'* or *'amir'*, and never tried to establish a permanent seat for his kingdom in a true nomadic fashion, he used to change his station. S.A Yazdi, *Zafarnamah,* 1, Calcutta, 1887, p.38.
[159] The Chaghtaids of Transoxiana called their enemies, the Moghuls as *'Jete'*. See Dughlat, *Tarikh-i Rashidi*, p.75.

former will come to him. However, *Shaikh* died and when latter's son reminded this promise, he not only accepted faith but also even asked his nobles to do so. In this way 160,000 people became Mussalman.[160] But at the same time, it is significant to note that he gave orders for Amir Buyun Suldus to be killed according to the code of the Mongols.[161] Haji Beg Barlas fled to Khurasan as he was not in a position to resist the invasion. Tughlaq Timur entrusted the task of conquered territories to his son Ilyas Khwaja Oghlan and returned to his own seat of government. Amir Bulaji Tughlaq (who has been mentioned as having raised Tughlaq Timur Khan, to the position of *Khan)* sought nine privileges for himself from the *Khan,* which was granted to his ancestors by Chinggis Khan.[162] Mirza Haider Dughlat writes that these nine privileges were contained in a *firman* issued under the seal of Tughlaq Timur Khan, which he saw with his own eyes.[163] On the basis of above references, it can be assumed that this practice of giving nine privileges, a Chinngisid custom, was followed at that time too.

The above event brought Timur into limelight for the first time. He expressed his allegiance to Mongol *Khan* who conferred on him the title of *Tuman- i Amir-Qarachar.*[164] In April 1361, Tughlaq Timur Khan again invaded Khurasan leading to rise in fortune of Timur as he took the advantage of Hajji Beg Barlas' absence and assumed the leadership of his clan and received favours from the Mongol

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[160] Ibid., pp.13-15.
[161] Ibid., p.22.
[162] Ibid., p.23.He even writes that his family too got these privileges.
[163] Ibid., p.55.
[164] Barthold, *Four Studies on the History of Central Asia*, 2, p.14.

Khan on the recommendation of one of his *amir* who requested the *Khan* to restore to Timur the territory which was his *right of inheritance.*[165] Soon, he came in to conflict with Tughlaq Timur when latter took the decision of subjugating the tribal leaders of the Chaghtai *ulus* and in order to do so, launched a powerful attack on them. Timur in this critical situation joined hands with Amir Husayn, the nephew of Abdallah. It was the time when Timur started to build himself as a sovereign. He saw a dream, which he looked as a good omen and a sign of heavenly favour.[166] Both Amir Husayn and Timur collected *amirs* and crushed Mongols but the need of the hour was to establish a strong centralized government; and for that one single authority was necessary to prevent the state from falling into disorder. Mirza Haider Dughlat quotes a couplet to highlight that the world without a leader is like a body without a head, and such a body is worthless even from the dust of the road.[167] No one was ready to submit to either of them (Husayn and Timur).[168] Therefore, they appointed Qabul Shah Oghlan as puppet *Khan*, and all the mighty rulers and proud princes at once bent their knees nine times in obeisance to him.[169] Bending of knees nine times which was Mongol tradition continued even in the time of Timurids and later under Mughals too.

Having discussed at some length the continuation of *tura* during Timur's time, it seems important to briefly study the application of *tura* during Shahrukh's

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[165] Dughlat, *Tarikh-i Rashidi*, p.19.
[166] Ibid., p.27.
[167] Ibid.
[168] Ibid., p.30.
[169] Ibid., p.31.

(Timur's son) reign. Shahrukh generally preferred *shariat* over *tura* to win over the support of various groups. There are instances when he tried to legalise his claims on the basis of both 'Islamic and Iranian traditions'.[170] Ibn Arab Shah wrote that *yasa* was completely given up during Shahrukh's reign.[171] Yazdi who wrote in Shahrukh's time, tried to portray the image of Timur as a true Muslim because by this time *shariat* had superseded *tura*.[172] He designated himself as *Khaqan* and discontinued the practice of appointing Mongol *Khans*.[173] However, he continued to maintain Chinggisid connection by identifying Timurid dynasty as a successor to Il-Khanids (a successor Chinggisid dynasty). A.Z.V Togan, on the contrary is of the view that Shahrukh continued to followed *yasa* throughout his reign and the intrest shown to *shariat* law was of only secondary nature.[174] However, Ibn Arabshah writes:

> It is said that Shahrukh repealed the laws of Jenghiz Khan, and ordained that they should make his rule flow along the streams of the law of Islam, but this I do not consider true, since it is considered among them as the purest religion and true faith and if it is happened that he should summon his chief men and doctors to his palace and closing the door look upon them from his

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[170] Beatrice Forbes Manz, "The Legacy of Amir Timur," *Asian Art* Spring (1989), p.26.
[171] Arab Shah, *Tamerlane or Timur: The Great Amir*, p.299.
[172] Barthold, *Four Studies on the History of Central Asia*, 2, p.22.
[173] Under Shahrukh there was no nominal Khan.
[174] Manz, "The Legacy of Amir Timur,"p.26.

> throne and propose to them anything of this sort, truly
> they would flee like asses to the gates.[175]

From the above, it appears that although Shahrukh tried to establish himself as an independent Timurid ruler avoiding even nominal allegiance to Mongol *Khaqan* but apparently because of social and cultural pressures, Chinggisid connections could not be completely avoided.

Shahrukh's son Ulugh beg, however, followed more closely the practice of Amir Timur and called himself *gurgen* (son in law), a title neither taken by Shahrukh nor by any of his sons.[176] Ulugh Beg's regime witnessed a constant struggle between *shariat* and *tura*. He also maintained a nominal Chinggisid prince as *Khaqan* but coins were issued in the name of Shahrukh and only *yarligs* were published in the name of *Khaqan*. Satuq Khan held the title of *Khan* in Samarqand but the real power was in the hands of Ulugh Beg. Shotly afterwards, he sent him to Moghulistan and proclaimed another *Khan* in his place.[177] However, in the coins as well as in *khutba*, the name of the *Khan* along with Ulugh Beg was included.[178] Ulugh Beg also discontinued the practice of *Khaqan* accompanying the Timurid ruler in wars. The *Khan* was confined in the *Hayat-i Khani* (Khan's enclosure).[179]

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[175] Arab Shah, *Tamerlane or Timur: The Great Amir*, p. 299.
[176] He formed matrimonial alliances with the Mongol family. Barthold, *Four Studies on the History of Central Asia*, 2, p.86.
[177] Dughlat, *Tarikh-i Rashidi*, pp.71-72.
[178] Barthold, *Four Studies on the History of Central Asia*, 2, p.85.
[179] Dughlat, *Tarikh-i Rashidi*, p.83.

However, Ulugh Beg is also said to have expressed his desire to learn *yasa*.[180] Nevertheless, Ulugh Beg's reign was dominated by Khwaja Ahrar's influence.[181] Thus, the tradition started by Timur of using both *Turko-Mongol* and Islamic codes side by side continued in the reign of his successor too, but with the passing of time the *shariat* law got precedence over *tura* and gradually the usage of *tura* was confined to social etiquettes. Ulugh Beg and his son Abdul Aziz were killed by Ulugh Beg's another son Abdul Latif who was more religious than his predecessor.[182]

After the death of Shams-i Jahan (son of Khizr Khwaja, a Chaghtai), his brother Muhammad Khan ascended the throne. He sent an embassy to Shahrukh expressing his submission to him, but he continued to create problems in Mawarannahr by supporting the rebel amirs.[183] Mirza Haider Dughlat writes that Muhammad Khan took strong measures to make Mughals follow Islam.[184] In 1420, according to *Tarikh-i Rashidi* there was feud a between Vais Khan and Shir Muhammad Oghlan, the son of Muhammad Khan. In the time of Shahrukh, Khudaidad (son of Amir Bulaji) was the head of the Mongol amirs, for whom it was not known that he was on whose side but was in touch with Ulugh Beg who at the time ruled Mawarranahr in his father's name.[185] Barthold observes that probably after instigated by Khudaidad; Ulugh Beg took an expedition to

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[181] Mansura Haider, *Medieval Central Asia*, p.197.
[182] Barthold writes that he was given the title of *Khan* (in the inscription of 834/1434-35).
[183] Barthold, *Four Studies on the History of Central Asia*, 1, p.144.
[184] Dughlat, *Tarikh-i Rashidi*, p.58; Barthold, *Four Studies on the History of Central Asia*, 1, p.145
[185] Barthold, *Four Studies on the History of Central Asia*, 1, p.145.

Moghulistan.[186] However, campaign was called off on assurance of submission by Mongol amirs. After the death of Shir Muhammad, Vais Khan came into power but his reign was marked with incursions of the eastern heathen Mongols.[187] Vais Khan fought sixty-one battles with *Qalmaqs*, in which once he won, twice was taken as prisoner and even was forced to marry his sister to them,[188] and later was killed in battle with Satuq Khan. Vais Khan was taken as prisoner in battle with *Qalmaqs* and brought before Isan Taishi who thought to himself, "if he is really a descendant of Chinggis Khan, he will not do me an obeisance, but will look upon me as an inferior." Therefore, Isan Taishi dismounted and advanced with respect towards the *Khan*, the latter turned his face and did not raise his hands. Afterwards, when *Khan* was asked that why he has not shown obeisance he replied that for a *Mussalman* it is not right to do homage to an infidel, so he didn't salute to him.[189] After his death, the Mongol *amirs* were divided into two factions, one group wishing *Khanate* for Vais Khan's eldest son Yunus Khan, and other that for his second son Esan Buqa in which the latter's group gained power. Therefore, Yunus Khan along with his supporters went to Mawarranahr from where he was sent to Persia by Ulugh Beg.[190] In the early years of Esan Buqa's reign, some Mongol *amirs* enjoyed complete independence.

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[186] Ibid.
[187] Ibid., p.146.
[188] Dughlat, *Tarikh-i Rashidi*, pp. 65-67.
[189] Ibid., p.65.
[190] Babar, *Babarnama (Memoirs of Babar)*; Barthold, *Four Studies on the History of Central Asia*,1, pp.147-148.

Thus, it is clear from the above discussion that the status of Timur, despite his low sounding titles did not put any limitations on his absolute powers, which he exercised unabated. It is probably because of these reasons that after his death his name (the name of Amir Timur) itself provided 'legitimacy' to rule.

2.3 The Timurid Legacy and 'Legitimacy'

With the accession of Abu Said Mirza, son of Miran Shah (Son of Timur) and grandfather of Babar some very significant changes had taken place in the Timurid polity. Abu Said Mirza started taking direct interest in the internal affairs of the Mongol *Khans*. The 'legitimacy' provided by the legacy of Timur provided him the necessary groundwork.

After taking possession of Khurasan, Abu Said Mirza intended upon taking possession of Iraq but faced strong resistance from Esan Buqa. The latter placed his brother (Yunus Khan) as *Khan* and made many compacts and agreements with him. Abu Said explained to him that his appointment to the position of *Khan* was a political necessity[191] and pointed that his position will remain the same that the *Khans* had during the reign of Timur. Abu Said also emphasized that it was he who raised him to the position of *Khan* from the life of poverty.[192] As things had changed, therefore, he asked Yunus Khan to lay all his former pretensions behind

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[191] Dughlat, *Tarikh-i Rashidi*, pp.83-84.
[192] Ibid.

and to establish a bond of friendship between them.[193] He also obtained from him a pledge that he would give up his claim of Mawarannahr.[194]

R.P Tripathi is of the view that Abu Said went a step further when he asked Yunus Khan to lay all his pretensions behind[195] by which he meant that from now on no previous allegiance given to Chinggisids by the Timurids would be followed. He also advised the *Khan* to address him as a friend in communications and avoid using the language that the *Khans* earlier used in their correspondence with the *Mirzas*. He made these conditions applicable on his successors as well. [196] Abu Said also established matrimonial alliances by marrying his three sons with Yunus Khan's three daughters.[197]

Abu Said also maintained close relationship with Khwaja Ubaidullah Ahrar, the leading *Naqshbandi* saint of Central Asia who is believed to have prophesied Abu Said's success and acted as his spiritual guide. In the letters of Khwaja Ahrar we find that he used Abu Said as role model and uphclder of *shariat* for future generations. In one of the letters, addressed to Abu Said Khwaja Ahrar wrote, "to remove the evils of the customs of strangers (*sharr-i rusum biganegan*) from the region of Mavarannahr, we request your majesty to direct [your] noble resolve to

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[193] Ibid., p.172.
[194] Ibid., pp.148-149.
[195] R. P. Tripathi. *Some Aspects of Muslim Administration,* Allahabad: Central Book Depot, 1978, p.109.
[196] Ibid.
[197] Ibid.

removing the evils of the customs of foreigners from that region [Khurasan]."[198] Jo- Ann Gross writes that Khwaja's twenty-one letters focuses on the preservation and spread of *shariat* throughout the Timurid domain and the eradication of infidels and their customs.[199]

Appeals were made by him to Timurids to follow the Islamic laws instead of Turko–Mongolian customs.[200] In a number of letters, Khwaja Ahrar had expressed his contempt for the custom of strangers (*sharr-i rusum biganegan*), which in all likely hood was the *tura,* or *yasa* of Chinggis. In his dealings, Yunus Khan preferred *shariat* to Chinggisid custom and this was so well known that Khwaja Ahrar wrote letters to neighbouring Muslims, saying: "We have seen Sultan Yunus Khan, and it is unlawful to molest the tribe whose chief is so good a Mussalman."[201] At another place he said, "I have seen Yunus Khan, and the Mongols and the subject of such a Padishah not to be carried off captives. They are people of Islam."[202] From this time we hardly get any refrence of Mongols being sold as slaves in Mavarranahr and Khorasan.[203] In spite of being a Mongol, Yunus Khan was keen towards establishing himself in a town instead of leading a nomadic life, the reason for which he was inclined towards religion. He realised

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[198]See, *The Letters of Khwaja 'Ubayd Allah Ahrar and His Associates*, Asom Urunbaev and Jo-Ann Gross tr. Leiden, 2002.
[199] Ibid., p.33.
[200]Ibid., p.35.
[201] Ibid., p.156.
[202] Ibid., p.98.
[203] Ibid.

that without permanent settlement his goal of making his subjects true Muslims could not be achieved.[204]

But Yunus Khan was very ambitious; as soon as he strengthened his position he started making efforts to enlarge his possessions. Even before Abu Said's death in 1469, Yunus had resumed his raids upon the Timurid possession; as he had his eyes on Farghana.[205] By 1472, he almost brought the entire area, which was under the control of Esan Buqa and united the entire rgion into single unit. He utilized the feuds among the sons of Abu Said for increasing his fortunes. After his death in 1487, the Mongols according to their custom placed his eldest son Mahmud on throne.[206] But Mahmud failed to maintain the prestige of his house because of his incompetence. He replaced five of the great *amirs*, each of whom was the head a department.[207] He also failed in his attempt to capture Samarqand.

After the death of Abu Said, his kingdom according to Chinggisid custom was divided among his four sons. Sultan Ahmad Mirza who was the eldest got Samarqand and Bukhara; Mahmud Mirza got Badakhshan and the surrounding region of Hindukush, Asfera, Tirmiz and Hisar in the Amu Darya basin, Ulugh Beg got Kabul and Ghazni while the youngest among them Umar Shaikh was conferred Farghana. The region of Khurasan was under Sultan Husain Mirza Baiqara, another great grandson of Amir Timur. Umar Shaikh's relation with his

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[204] Ibid, p.156; Barthold, *Four Studies on the History of Central Asia*, 2, p.150.
[205] Barthold, *Four Studies on the History of Central Asia*, 2, p.150.
[206] Dughlat, *Tarikh-i Rashidi*, p.156.
[207] Ibid., p.119.

brother Ahmad Mirza was bitter due to his interest in Samarqand for which he also paid Akhsi as price to Yunus Khan. Babur referred Ahmad Mirza as a very sporting *Padishah*, the like of which had not been seen since Ulugh Beg Mirza.[208] Samarqand always remained very prestigious and aspired by not only Chinggisids but by Timurids too. Babur writes that his father, Umar Shaikh led army into Samarqand various times but sometimes he was beaten and sometimes he was forced to retire against his will.[209] According to Babur, besides Andijan, his father Umar Shaikh had in his possession for sometime Tashkent and Sairam, which his elder brother Ahmad Mirza had assigned to him. He also held Shahrukhiya, which he captured for some times. But the rift among the sons of Abu Said was used by Yunus Khan to strengthen his position. Being an elder member of the family he offered to mediate and as a price got possession of the territories of Sairam and Tashkent.

Before the advent of Babur on the screen of Central Asia, the conditions were rather chaotic The sons of Abu Said were constantly fighting among themselves for enlarging their territories. The relation between Umar Shaikh and his elder brother Ahmad Mirza were at its worst. To solve their disputes, they took the help of Mongol Khan who as mentioned above took heavy price in the form of territorial concessions. The nobility at this time became quite strong and posed a great threat to the stability of the Timurid state They not only acted as king-

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[208] Babar, *Babarnama (Memoirs of Babar)* ,1, p.35.
[209] Ibid, pp.12-13.

makers but some among them even aspired to become king. For example the Timurid princes became mere puppets in the hands of Khusrau Shah.[210] As a matter of fact, in their anxiety to have a large following of influential people, these rulers admitted and promoted unworthy and contentious nobles of Hisar, Tirmiz and Tar to very high positions.[211]

2.4 Sovereign, Legitimacy and the Changing Notions of Siyasa

The above discussion makes it clear that by the turn of the fifteenth century; 'legitimacy' was an important vehicle for the sons and ambitious nobles to gain access to sovereignty. This 'legitimacy' was often manufactured, If the aspirant was not of 'royal blood', through panegyrist and clergy, and also quite often by forming matrimonial alliances. The role of political marriages (like that of Timur himself) or the support of popular *ulemas* (like Ubaidullah Ahrar) in providing necessary 'legitimacy' to rule has already been discussed. However, such alliances and moves made both the nobility and the *ulema* quite powerful and some times even acquired the position 'king makers'. Thus, it is not surprising that during the period under review, we find steep rise in court politics ensuing from the rise in the power of the clergy and the nobility. It remains important to assess the position of 'sovereign' under this changing notions of *siyasa*, whereby what it mattered in the

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[210] He blinded Sultan Masud Mirza and placed Baisunghaar Mirza in Hisar.

[211] Babar, *Babarnama (Memoirs of Babar)*, 1, p.326.

end was 'movers and shakers' and the entire court apparently was reduced to a 'chess board'.

We may begin our discussion by assessing the status of Timus as a 'sovereign' in the circumstances and at the time where apparently the political ambitions of every noble, apparently were very high. Some scholars suggested that Timur was not an absolute 'sovereign' as he and his descendents accepted the nominal over lordship of Chinggisids.[212] To say so seems incorrect, as it was Timur who sat on raised dais and received homage while the Mongol *Khan*, simply took up his place among Timur's courtiers.[213] It is important to observe the meeting between Ibn khaldun and Timur where *Khan*, whom Timur represented as king and (himself as his representative), was standing behind Timur with other courtiers.[214] Timur at the great *qurultai* in 1404 named Pir Muhammad (grandson) as his successor and asked foreign ambassador to pay obeisance to him.[215] The nomination of an heir in his lifetime was an action taken like that of Chinngis Khan. Timur at this *qurultai* also emphasised his position as a sovereign because by this time he had given up the practice of maintaining puppet *Khans*.[216] In his reception to Clavijo, he also

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[212] Khan "The Turko-Mongol Theory of Kingship," p.7.
[213] Clavijo, *Narrative of the Spanish Embassy*, p.254; For details see Barthold, *Four Studies on the History of Central Asia*, 2, p.25
[214] Khaldun, *Ibn Khaldun and Tamerlane*. p.37
[215] Clavijo, *Narrative of the Spanish Embassy*, p.221
[216] After the death of Sultan Mahmud, Timur continued to rule in the name of deceased Sultan.

echoed the universalistic claims of earlier Mongol Khan's by referring to the 'King of Spain' as his son.[217]

Timur was the pivot of administrative affairs and campaigns without any interference of *Khan* or any other Mongol chief. He without the slightest hesitation always received honours due to the Mongol Khan.[218] He considered himself as "the inheritor and the continuer of the Empire of the Chaghtay Ulus."[219] Thus, there is no shadow of doubt over the absolute authority of Timur and this can be primarily the reason for Timur to be content with the title of *amir*. Moreover, there was never any assertion of authority by the puppet Khan, nor he ever exerted any influence in state affairs. However, it is also true that Timur was insecure in his position not because of any individual threat but because of the political situation of the time and respect for Chinggisid lineage. Otherwise, Timur was an absolute monarch having all the realms of administration and political power in his hands. The author of *Tarikh-i Rashidi* clarly mentions that from the time of Amir Timur to that of Abu Said the custom of keeping Chaghtaid on the throne with the title of the King was followed who was nothing more than a prisoner.[220] Besides, we hardly get any reference to suggest that Timur ever shared his powers as a king with *Khan*. The Mongol *Khan* at the court of Timur was merely a nominal figurehead with no powers at all. Rulers of the conquered territories, who have

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[217] Clavijo, *Narrative of the Spanish Embassy*, p.221; Yusuf, *Two Studies in Early Mughal History*, p.13.
[218] Barthold, *Four Studies on the History of Central Asia* , 2, p.25 ; Yusuf, Two Studies in Early Mughal History, p.7.
[219] Hookham Hilda, *Tamberlane the Conqueror*, p.86.
[220] Dughlat, *Tarikh-i Rashidi*, p.172; ArabShah, *Tamerlane or Timur: The Great Amir*, p.13

recognised the suzerainty of Timur, recited the name of the Timur and not of his puppet *Khan* in *khutba.* [221]

In spite of all this, Timurid Empire began to collapse after Timur's death because of his lack of trust in functionaries of his government. The power, which he gathered so diligently, was primarily personal, centred on him. Timur followed Chinggisid pattern of 'division of Empire' of the separate *ulus*, firstly with himself as the head of Empire, and afterwards to be ruled by his appointed successor as head. Since he hardly gave any real powers to any of his sons or grandsons, soon after his death (1405) a war of succession started among his sons in complete disregard of his will, in favour of Pir Muhammad---his grandson------and this became the regular feature of the Timurid Empire thereafter.

After Timur, 'legitimacy' was almost entirely transferred to the Timurid line. Anyone who could claim any legitimate connection to Timur was able to contest for the throne. Eventually, none of Timur's offsprings was able to succeed to Timur's throne. Instead, several kingdoms sprang from Timur's domain. Establishment of Mughal Empire in India under Babur, which shall be taken in detail in the next chapter, was simply an end result of the kind of politics that aroused the ambitions of every single person who could claim 'legitimacy', either through blood connection or through manufacturing.

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[221] Khizr Khan – ruler of Hindustan continued to recognise the suzerainty of Timur, whose name was recited in the Khutba and to whom used to send tribute.

CHAPTER-THREE

Legitimacy and Justice: Babur and the Rise of Defiant Nobility

Babur's expeditions into Hindustan from his 'temporary' base at Kabul successfully culminated in A.D 1526 at Panipat. Ibrahim Lodi, the Afghan ruler of Delhi suffered humiliating defeat at the hands of Babur's army. The former being killed in the battle at Panipat, Babur's crowing to the throne of Hindustan, was a mere formality. Thus, Babur's long 'cherished ambition' of conquering Hindustan, at last had come true. The conquest of Hindustan by Babur had remarkable significance and consequences. It marked the establishment of Mughal dynasty in India, as well as provided a base for this particular Central Asian family to acquire 'sovereign' status, which in any case appears to be a daunting task in their homeland and, thus, has to be pursued elsewhere.[222] This chapter explores some of the reasons for the Mughal conquest of Hindustan and its significance.

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[222] The name 'Mughal' is derived from the word 'Mongol'. Babur, the founder of Mughal Empire in South Asia was a Central Asian and a descendant of two great Empire builders of Central Asia, namely Chinggis Khan, and Amir Timur, better known as Tamerlame. For a complete study on Chinggis Khan and the division of his kingdom, see Juvaini, *Tarikh-i Jahan Gusha*, tr. J.A.Boyle as *History of World Conquerors*, 2 vols., Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1958. For Timur's rise to the power, see Mirza Haider Dughlat, *Tarikh-i Rashidi*. Also see, Beatrice Forbes Manz, *The Rise and Rule of Tamerlane*, Great Britain, 1989. For Babur and his ancestors see, *Baburnama* (Memoirs of Babur). However, the translator suggests that the name 'Mughal' applied to the dynasty of Babur in South Asia is a misnomer (see vol.1, p.158).

3.1 'Legitimacy' and Its Predicaments: Babur's Conquest of Hindustan

The seventeenth century chronicles record an interesting event under the year 1574. "At that time Tsar Ivan Vasil'evich enthroned Simeon Bekbulatovich as *Tsar* in Moscow and crowned him with the crown of the *Tsars*, and called himself (simply) Ivan of Moscow; he left the city and lived in Petrovka. All the offices of stardom he passed to Simeon and he himself rode simply, like a boyar with shafts, and whenever he comes to *Tsar* Simeon, he sits at a distance from the *Tsar's* place, together with the boyars."[223] Who was this Simeon Bekbulatovich? He was a genuine Chinggissid, a descendant of Orda, the eldest son of Jochi, who was the eldest son of Chinggis Khan. Such important was the legacy of Chinggis Khan, in providing legitimacy to rule, which after him was equally granted to Timur.

The legacy providing 'legitimacy'to rule certainly was not a problem for the Mughal dynasty under Babur which claimed its ancestry from the two great conquerors of Central Asia Chinggis Khan and Amir Timur. This ancestral 'legitimacy' however, was also enjoyed by several other princes in Central Asia such as the Shaibanids who traced their descent from Jochi's son Shaiban, or the Ashtarkhanids (who traced their descent from another son of Jochi, Toqay Timur). The most obvious, and of course bitter outcome of these numerous ambitious princes claiming highest form of legitimacy can be witnessed from their conflicts,

[223] See for details "Moscow, the Golden Horde, and the Kazan Khanate from a polycultural point of view," *Slavic Review* 26 (1967).

to gain foothold in Central Asia, especially among the Mughals and the Shaibanids. It was these conflicts that ousted the former not only from Samarqand but from Central Asia as well.

The history of Babur right from the time of his succession to the principality of Farghana in 1494, at the tender age of eleven years to his conquest of Hindustan bares witness to numerous pol'tical crises, which at times threatened not only his political position but also even his life. This crisis continued in some form even after his conquest of India. The continuation of the predicaments of the Islamic/Muslim tradition which at the death of a ruler, and often during his life time gave rise to number of 'legitimate' claimants inspired princes of the same 'blood' to claim the throne, have been posing serious problem to the rulers.

The *Baburnama* is full of intimate details of a number of conspiracies hatched against him. One such conspiracy mentioned was an attempt to displace Babur and enthrone his younger brother Jahangir Mirza by one of his well-reputed noble Hasan-i Yaqub soon after his accession. There was also an incident where Ibrahim Saru captured the Afsara fort and read the *khutba* in the name of Baisunghar Mirza.[224] Besides that his uncles, Sultan Ahmad Mirza and Mahmud Khan invaded Farghana soon after his accession and compelled him to accept their

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[224] Babar, *Babarnama (Memoirs of Babar)*, 1, pp. 43 & 52.

subordination.[225] Several other references of similar nature may be found in not only Babur's memoirs but also in other contemporary accounts.

Babur was forced not only to adopt an attitude of re-conciliation but also to bow down to this 'legitimacy' principle, indicating the towering position of all blood relatives hovering around the position of a 'sovereign' is evident from the fact that in spite of taking stern and bold action against Mahmud Khan, he went to meet him and knelt before him. The tradition as well as metaphor of kneeling within Central Asian political principles was attribution of higher authority to the one who was knealt to, and various incidences from Babur's memoirs confirms this conclusion. The incident and rationale of the meeting is recorded in *Baburnama* in the following sentences:

> It occurred to me that if since I was so close, I went and waited on him (Mahmud Khan), he being, as it were, my father and my elder brother, and if by gone resentments were laid aside, it would be good hearing and seeing for far and near.[226]

The bitter relations of Babur with his relatives apparently were over the small principality of Andijan. Besides Mahmud Khan, it was also the strong desire of Auzun Hasan and Sultan Ahmad Tambal to take up the possession of Andijan and Akhsi for Jahangir Mirza and the latter even took to the recourse of revolting

[225] Ibid., pp. 30-31.
[226] Ibid., p.54.

against Babur.[227] It proved disastrous for Babur when he moved out of Samarqand to save Andijan because in the process of saving Andijan he lost both the places.

If the haughtiness of Babur's uncles were not enough to reduce his position to the lowest pedestal then there were also his nobles who were also prepared to challenge his authority. As a matter of fact, due to the pressure of his nobles Babur had to make peace with Jahangir Mirza. Babur writes in his memoirs:

> Those two (Auzun Hasan and Ahmad Tambal) however were our two great begs; if we gave no ear to their words and if we did not make peace, other things from them were probable! It had to be! Peace was made in this fashion;——the districts on the Akhsi side of the Khujand——water were to depend on Jahangir, those on the Andijan side, one me; Auzkirt was to be left in my jurisdiction.............when the districts were settled and I and Jahangir made our agreement, we should march together against Samarqand; and when I was in possession of Samarqand, Andijan was to be given to Jahangir.[228]

[227] Ibid., p.87.
[228] Ibid.

Several other nobles also like Ali Dost Taghai and his son Muhammad Dost flouted Babur's authority by "behaving like Sultans."[229]

Being aware of the crisis developing due to the priciple of legitimacy, Babur now laid more emphasis on his Timurid heritage and the hereditary right of the soverign. In his letter to Sultan Said, regarding seccession in Badakhshan, he gave importance to the 'hereditary rights of the heirs'. His explicit and eloquent statement after the second conquest of Samarqand in A.D. 1501 points towards the language game of maneuvering, harnessing and tilting the legitimacy principle to his own favour. Apparently being proud of the victory at Samarqand, Babur writes:

> Samarqand for nearly one hundred and forty years had been the capital of our dynasty. An alien, and of what stamp! An Auzbeg foe had taken possession of it! It had slipped from our hands; God gave it again![230]

After regaining Samarqand, Babur compares himself with Sultan Husain Mirza who took Herat. Here comparison was of age, experience as well as the respective position of the individuals. Babur was nineteen year old, whereas Sultan Husain was thirty-two years old. Sultan Husain was an experienced general whereas his opponents were inexperienced. On the other hand, Babur was inexperienced whereas his opponent Shaibani Khan was a seasoned military campaigner.

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[229] Ibid., p.119.
[230] Ibid, p.134.

However, he adds that it is not to undermine the reputation of anybody or to magnify himself but to narrate the fact.

The loss of Samarqand to Shaibani Khan after a very short span was again the result of oscillatory loyalty of his blood relations, namely Sultan Husain Mirza, who conspired with the latter giving little regard for his blood relation. The result of the battle of Sar-i Pul between Shaibani Khan and Babur was thus pretty obvious and Samarqand was lost again. After the death of Sultan Husain Mirza, Babur regarded himself as the most superior of all the 'legitimate' relatives. His call for respect and obedience from Badi-uz-zaman Mirza was on the pretext that he was the most able of all the surviving Timurids, and had sat on the throne of Timur (Samarqand) twice. However, Babur always remained very kind towards his blood relations and other members of Chaghtai dynasty and helped them in their time of distress despite their unfavourable attitude towards him.[231] It seems he adopted this particular attitude because of the importance given to such relationship in the sixteenth century. However, Babur himself had to face very strong opposition from his relations and ultimately was pushed out of his homeland. Fortunately, he succeeded in establishing himself in Kabul. It is significant to note that Babur had to suffer because of his close connection with the 'house of Timur'. In Samarqand, there were several other princes having similar relationships with Timur and all of them claimed themselves as legitimate successors of the Timurid kingdom. In the struggle that continued between Babur

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[231] Babar, *Babarnama (Memoirs of Babar)*, 1, p.318.

and his blood relations for quite some time for the throne of Samarqand, Babur was ultimately defeated and expelled by them who were also legitimate successors of Timur. The impact of this 'legitimacy' paradigm in medieval *siyasa* was unique and hardly ever happened with such intensity.

Although after being expelled from Central Asia Babur established himself at Kabul in 1504, it took him another fifteen long years before finally making his attempts to conquer Hindustan. Thus, arguments that Babur, immediately after the conquest of Kabul had started making plans for conquering Hindustan, supported by a statement from his own memoirs, needs to be perilously scrutinized. Writing about his early expedition on Hindustan after the battle of Panipat, Babur notes that his desire, right from the time when Kabul was conquered, was to acquire the territories of Hindustan.[232] Two questions thus arise out from this scenario. First, why did Babur desire to conquer Hindustan when he always preferred to establish his rule over Samarqand and Farghana? Secondly, if the conquest and acquisition of Hindustan had been looming in Babur's mind, ever since the conquest of Kabul, why did Babur delay the proceedings for Hindustan for fifteen years? Moreover in these fifteen years, Babur continuously tried to regain a foothold in Central Asia and never thought, for even once, about the conquest of Hindustan. The long gaps in Babur's memoirs further complicated the whole issue.

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[232] Ibid., 2, pp. 478-479.

The answers to the above questions could partially be answered from the political traditions and structure in Central Asia. It has already been stated that Babur desired for sovereignty——a completely mastery over Samarqand and Farghana. Besides acquisition of territories, the term 'sovereignty', according to political theorists, also encompasses 'recognition' from the other rulers, in Babur's case, the other warring parties for Samarqand and Farghana. Thus, even if these territories were acquired, it was extremely difficult to sustain the power, because the other claimants continued to make efforts to recover these territories. Evidently, the capture of Samarqand, as well as its subsequent loss within a short time not only by Babur, but also by other contenders' points towards the above justification. This game of 'gain and losses' of Samarqand, in turn again questions the qualification of the term legitimacy in the whole concept of 'sovereignty'. Despite winning Samarqand, Babur was hardly recognized as a 'sovereign' ruler by the other warring parties. His own troops remained dissatisfied. His *begs* and *amirs* always threatened his commands because of his own weak position and partly because of the prevailing political conditions in Central Asia that did not allow any one to get acquire the status of 'sovereign'.

Babur's conquest of Hindustan apparently was more to a necessity than to the choice. Far off from his homeland and with a different political structure of Hindustan, Babur could perhaps effectively rule as a sovereign. Providing justification for the delay in the conquest of Hindustan, Babur again blames his *begs* by stating that they always stopped him from moving in that direction. Babur in his memoirs writes:

> My desire for Hindustan had been constant, but owing sometimes to the feeble counsels of begs, sometimes to the non- accompaniment of elder and young brethren, a move on Hindustan had not been practicable and its territories had remained unsubdued. At length, no such obstacles were left; no beg great or small an opposing word......[233]

Babur's daughter, Gulbadan Begum, writing from her sour memories also highlights this fact in *Humayunnama.* She writes:

> He (Babur) had always desired to go into Hindustan, and had not carried out his wish because of the feeble counsels of his amirs and the non-agreement of his brothers. When at length these were gone, and there remained no amirs such as could argue against it, he accomplished his desire.[234]

The lamentations of both Babur and particularly of her daughter against the attitude of the Central Asian nobles as hurdles in former attaining the status of sovereign, highlights the desire of the Mughals to acquire 'sovereign' status than the mere acquisition of some territories, even when it could only be realized in a 'far-off' country. This is particularly evident from Gulbadan Begam, who at the

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[233] Ibid.
[234] Begum, *Humayunnama*, p.91.

time of her writing was actually witness to the real status of a 'sovereign', a *Padishah*, embodied in the person of her nephew Akbar, whose every word, was final and a 'decree', and was obeyed and followed by everyone. Thus the situation during Akbar's reign, a time when Gulbadan was writing her memoirs left her perhaps, with no choice but to lament on the condition of his father during that phase of his life.

This reference of his desire to conquer Hindustan also indicates that now he was in a position to assert his authority and act as strong ruler. In Central Asia whenever through grit and determination he tried to establish himself as strong ruler, his nobles instead of supporting him put forth such conditions which could hardly permit him to act as 'sovereign'. Not only, they took undue advantage of his young age and in-experience and on occasions through the machinations of these elements he had to submit before his nobles like Tambal and Ali-Dost. After the conquest of Kabul, Babur tried to assert his position by dismissing recalcitrant nobles such as Qambar Ali and Baqi Chaghniani. It appears that by the time Babur decided to proceed on his conquest of India he had acquired sfficient powers to bring his nobility under his control. Thus, when Babur decided to proceed on an expedition to Bajaur, in 1519, none of his *begs* opposed the move.

Whatever be the reasons behind his conquest of Hindustan, it is important to notice that he never forgot to emphasize the fact that Hindustan was once held by the Timurids and therefore, he had a right to reconquer it. He never considered it as an alien land. There are other references in his memoir, which strengthens the discourse carried above. From Bajaur, Babur moved towards Bhira, which was

under Daulat Khan Lodi and was a boundary between the kingdom of Kabul and Lodi Empire. In his memoirs, Babur writes:

> We had turned off from Bajaur with Bhira in our thoughts. Ever since we came into Kabul it had been in my mind to move on Hindustan, but this had not been done for a variety of reasons.[235]

Babur further adds:

> As it was always in my heart to possess Hindustan, and as these several countries, Bhira, Khush-ab, Chin-ab and Chiniut had once been held by the Turk, I pictured them as my own and was resolved to get them into my hands, whether peacefully or by force. For these reasons it being imperative to treat these hill men well, the following orders was given: — Do not hurt or harm to the flocks and herds of these people, or even to their cotton-ends and broken needles![236]

He further writes that picturing these countries as our own (once occupied by the Turk), there was no over-running or plundering.[237] Equating Bhira with Samarqand and allowing it the same sanctity makes the discourse even more interesting. Babur disallowed the looting of Bhira and asked his army not to ill-

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[235] Babar, *Babarnama (Memoirs of Babar)*, 1, pp.377-378.
[236] Ibid., p.380.
[237] Ibid., p.384.

treat its inhabitants. This statement of Babur echoes similar to the orders given after gaining Samarqand. Thus, the impression, which Babur was giving to his nobility, was that Hindustan was their homeland.

It is also significant to note that from Bhira, Babur sent an envoy to Delhi with a message in which he asked Ibrahim Lodi to hand him over all those territories which were once held by the Timurids.[238] Apparently, Babur laid claim over these territories as a direct descendant of Timur and thus a rightful claimant having hereditary rights of succession.

It may be pointed that as soon as Babur had proceeded on his conquest of Hindustan, in 1519, he was contacted by a number of influential Indian nobles especially of Sikander Lodi who were unhappy with Ibrahim Lodi and promised to support him in his campaign. In reply, Babur assured them of 'protection and favour'.[239] However, the earlier expeditions were not very successful because of problems in Kabul that used to crop up from time to time and the uncooperative attitude of his Indian allies specially Daulat Khan and Alam Khan. Babur had promised to help Alam Khan, on the condition that while he would succeed to the thron of Agra, Lahore and the entire area west of it will become part of Babur's kingdom of Kabul.[240] But he deserted Babur at the crucial moment and the campaign failed. However, when Aalam Khan went to seek his help again in a

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[238] Ibid., pp.384-385.
[239] Babar, *Babarnama (Memoirs of Babar)*,1, pp.175-176; Afzal Husain, *The Nobility Under Akbar and Jahangir: A Study of Family Groups*, New Delhi:,Manohar, 1999, p.2.
[240]Babar, *Babarnama (Memoirs of Babar)*, 1, p.444.

'wretched condition' Babur received him favourably. Mohibul Hasan writes that Babur did so because he wanted to use him as a pawn in forthcoming struggle with Ibrahim.[241]

It has been argued that Babur's inability to establish himself at home in Central Asia stemmed from his failure to gather sufficient support base among either of the two groups, which could have ensured his power: the most urbanized Timurids and the remnants of the semi-nomadic Mongols. Where as Babur's Uzbek rival, Shaibani Khan sought to strengthen his Timurid 'legitimacy' by marrying Babur's maternal aunt, two daughters of his maternal step-uncles, Babur's own sister, and arranged to have other members of his family to enter into similar marriages.

As a true Chinggisid, the Uzbek rulers also enjoyed a claim to 'legitimacy'. In Central Asia, they were the major force to be reckoned with for three and a half centuries, and a constant concern to neighbours on all sides including the Mughals, the Safavids, the Russian Tsars, and the Ming Chinese. The contemporary accounts, including the celebrated *Tazkira-i Muqim Khani* portrays the Uzbeks as patrons and protectors of the Timurids during the Uzbek ascendancy in the fifteenth century. The Mughals' sense of superiority over their Uzbek rivals to the northwest is clear, however. The official illusion hinted at in the Mughal chronicles is that the Mughals were still the true and legitimate masters of Central

[241] Mohibbul Hasan, Babar: Founder of Mughal Empire in India, Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1985, p.59.

Asia but hidirg their military debacles, portray that they were content to let the Uzbeks 'house sit' for them there as long as order was maintained.[242]

Timur was the prime role model and reference point for the achievements of Babur as well as for his successors. The legitimacy of the Mughals both in their own eyes and in the eyes of others rested on their lineal descent from Timur. At a remove of five generations, Babur was one among a number of Timur's descendants who were struggling to hold on to the splintering remnants of the Timurid Empire in Central Asia at the end of the fifteenth century. He was the only one to establish a power base in the sixteenth century, in India, which two centuries earlier had been conquered by Timur. This conquest of Timur however was short lived. The genealogical emphasis on Central Asian legends was, thus a necessity for Babur. Naturally he emphasized his descent from Timur, for whom, rather surprisingly; he usually employs in his memoirs no higher title than *beg*.[243] His seal in India also had his descent traced up to Timur.

The major p'edicament before Babur, however was to justify his claim on 'Hindustan' which he refers to as the part and parcel of his ancestors (Timur), but he found it hard to justify the massacre during his invasion of 1397-1399. The duality involved in emphasizing the genealogical links to Timur *(Sahib-i Qiran)*, the World Conqueror to reinforce the Indian Timurids' dynastic prestige and claim

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243 Babar, *Babarnama (Memoirs of Babar)*,1, p.14.

to royalty, on the one hand, and confronting the reality of the negative image of Timur in India, on the other, ensued another twist to the already complex medieval concept of *siyasa*. The attempts of Babur and his son and successor Humayun in formalizing and giving shape to their administration could well be attempted to understand from the point of view of the issue of 'justice' that increasingly formed the basis of medieval monarchy, and often alone provided 'legitimacy' to rule.

3.2 Babur's Concept of Justice in *Siyasa*: The Evolution of Mughal Politics

The principle of 'legitimacy' during the rule of *Sultans* of Delhi (1206-1526) for some time worked quite well in India. The *Ilbari Turks* (1210-1290) believed that none except the descendant of Iltutmish had the right to rule. It was only under the *Khalji* Sultans (1290-1320) that the concept of 'legitimacy' was relegated to the concept of 'right to rule' on the strength of military power *saif* (sword). The right to rule by the strength of sword was neither considered very ideal for establishing a dynastic monarchy nor could be considered a legitimate government. Thus, to provide legitimacy, to such a form of government the concept of justice or good governance was emphasised. To neutralise the negative image of Timur in India Babur found the concept of justice or good government as a very convenient tool. It seems that thereafter the concept of justice got the precedence over the principle of legitimacy.

It would perhaps be misleading to conclude that it was Babur who introduced the concept of 'justice' in the political framework for the first time in India. It has

already been discussed, in the first chapter that the concept of 'justice' was rigorously emphasized in the works of political theorists during the medieval period. The Islamic literary genre of 'advice to kings' or 'mirrors for princes' was not just the self-referential pastime of a frustrated class of scribes but an influential expression of values widely held by ruling groups and populations in the Islamic world.[244]

The *raison d'etre* for Kingship was maintenance of peace and dispension of 'justice' as emphasized in the treatises of the period. The thirteenth century Indian poet and historian Amir Khusru compares a ruler to a shepherd and says that if a shepherd is drunk or negligent his herd would find a place in the stomach of wolves. A king was duty bound to ensure peaceful and satisfactory conditions for both the rich and the poor. Yusuf Gada in his *Tuhfa-i Nasaih* (1393) is of the view that the exercise of property rights is subordinate tc duty and to morality.[245] The extent to which the duty of a ruler with regard to dispensation of 'justice' was emphasized may be gauged from the remarks of Zia Barani who wrote that kingship could co-exist with infidelity but not with injustice. The objective and duty of *sultan* is to deliver 'justice' irrespective of caste and class. 'Justice' here meant not only equality before the law or adherence to it, but also ensures the

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[244] Linda Darling, "Do Justice, Do Justice, For that is Paradise": Middle Eastern Advice for Indian Muslim Rulers," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East,* 22, no. 1 & 2, 2002, p.3.

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prosperity of agrarian society and protection of life and property of the common people.[246]

Babur and his successor as already mentioned traced their descent from Timur, founder of one of the largest empire in Central Asia after Chinggis Khan. Under the influence of the Timurid ideas of 'legitimacy', based on dynastic continuity, Babur struggled to replace the Delhi Sultanate's rule by swords (*saif*) strength with dynastic legitimacy. Besides that he also gave importance to the concept of 'justice' which also formed a part of the Timurid political heritage.

Linda Darling in a recent research argues that the early Mughals, including Babur, did not rely on this principle of 'justice' but on the contrary were dependent on the legitimizing paradigm of politics. She writes:

> Despite their Timurid connection, the early Mughal emperors rarely alluded directly to the circle of justice, but it contributed to the intellectual foundation of one of their favourite activities, the planting of gardens.[247]

At another place, she concludes that the circle of justice was not an important legitimizing factor under the early Mughals.[248] However, my understanding on the basis of the reading of the source material is just contrary to the above finding.

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[246] Ibid.
[247] Ibid., p.8
[248] Ibid.

As a matter of fact not only the circle of 'justice' was a legitimizing factor but it also played an important role in the affairs of administration; although it must be confessed that during Babur's time it was in the evolutionary stage.

It has already been argued that despite Babur's descent from Timur that provided him the 'legitimacy' to rule India, it was still difficult for him to neutralize his negative image of massacre ordered by him during his invasion of India in 1392. Thus, perhaps the only option left for him was to reinforce the principle of 'justice' that was already in practice in many other parts of the world. Babur's own literary taste contributed immensely in this aspect. Among his favourite readings were Firdausi's *Shahnama* and the *Khamsas* of Nizami and Amir Khusru. He carried his ancestor's copy of the *Shahnama* from Herat to India, and passed it on to his descendants.[249] It was after discussion with Babur that Ikhtiyar al-Husayni wrote his summary of Tusi's *Akhlaq-i Humayuni,* which elucidated the principles of ruler ship over the peasant using Tusi's concepts of balance and harmony.[250] It is quite well known that all these works were full of stories and anecdotes emphasizing the notions of 'justice'.[251].

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[249] See for details Babar, *Babarnama (Memoirs of Babar).*
[250] Muhammad Abdul Ghani, *A History of Persian Language and Literature at the Mughal Court,* Allahabad : Indian Press, 1929, p.43.
[251] A point also accepted by Linda Darling

The office of *sadr* was created even during the brief period of Babur's rule when other important offices were absent.[252] The various *Madad-i Mash* grants given to *ulema* and Sufi saints by Babur also points towards the increasing emphasis on 'justice'. He strongly criticizes Sultan Husain Mirza Baiqara's wasteful and extravagant administrative system due to which the peasants and soldiers remained thoroughly dissatisfied. But as very little work on Babur's administrative system had been done, these aspects have not been emphasised by modern historians. However, whatever little evidence we have, it clearly indicates that he gave more importance to the rule of 'justice' than to the rule of 'sword' and the principle of legitimacy.

3.3 Legitimacy and Justice' Conflict: Crisis During Babur's Reign

It seems that with the emphasis on the principle of legitimacy as a tool for assumption to the office of *sultan*, a number of princes and even nobles laid claim to the position of sovereign and in Central Asia Babur had witnessed that it had led to perpetual conflict among princes on that account. Therefore, he thought it fit now to lay more emphasis on 'justice' and on treatment of nobles with leniency even if sometimes they disobeyed him.

Now, we find that to pacify them he assigned revenues of large territories along with huge amount of gifts in cash and valuables. After the capture of Agra almost

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[252] Shaikh Zain was the *sadr* during the reign of Babur. See Yog Raj Malhotra, *Babur's Nobility and Administration in Hindustan,* p.122.

every *beg* was given huge amount of money. Babur writes that *begs* were given ten, eight, seven or six lakhs according to their ranks. He also sent gifts to those who were in Central Asia such as Prince Mirza Kamran, Muhammad Zaman Mirza, Hindal, and Askari and his other relatives in Samarqand, Kabul, Khurasan and Kashgar were showered with monetary and titular gifts. Gifts were even sent to nobility and soldiery in Kabul and to relatives in Iraq. Similiarly, offerings were also sent to holy men of Samarqand, Khurasan and Mecca-Medina. Babur writes that every person in Kabul, Khost and Badakhshan got one *Shahrukhi* (gold coin) irrespective of their age, sex, and status.[253] Besides his desire to favour his nobles and relatives with huge treasuries that he got at Agra and Delhi, Babur also wanted to tell his relations in Central Asia that he had established himself as an absolute ruler and he was looking for their assistance in consolidating his conquest in an alien land. Gulbadan Begum writes that he sent letters to them in this connection:

> We shall take into full favour all who enter our service, and especially such as served our father and grandfather and ancestors. If such will come to us, they will receive fitting benefits. Whoever there may be of the families of Sahib Qiran and Chengez Khan, let them turn towards our court. The most High has given us sovereignty in Hindustan, let them came that we may see prosperity together.[254]

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[253] Babar, *Babarnama (Memoirs of Babar)*, 2, pp.522-523.
[254] Begum, *Humayunnama*, p.97.

Besides that from the above it is also quite clear that Babur was trying to assert that he was superior to all other Timurid princes who were present in India as well as in Central Asia.

We also notice that right from his first invasion in 1519, Babur considered Hindustan as a Timurid possession and therefore asked his army to treat the inhabitants of Bhira leniently. He also entered into alliance with local Afghan chiefs to expel Ibrahim Lodi. However, when he found that Daulat Khan Lodi had broken the terms of the treaty reached between them, he took very strong action against him. In his memoirs he writes:

> I called thee Father, I showed thee more honour and respect than you couldst have asked. Thee and thy sons I saved from door-to- door life amongst the Baluchis. Thy family and thy *haram* I freed from Ibrahim's prison-house. Three krors I gave thee on Tatar Khan's lands. What ill sayest thou I have done thee, that thus shouldst hang a sword on thy either side, lead an army out, fall on lands of ours, and stir strife and trouble?[255]

It may aso be pointed out that for the first time he took such harsh action against a high noble. Probably by this action he wanted to send signals to his other Indian collaboraters that if they would try to create problems for him, they would be given exemplery punishment. However, he remained suspicious towards them and still

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[255] Babar, *Babarnama (Memoirs of Babar)*, 2, p.459.

placed more reliance on his Central Asian nobles despite their poor track record in Samarqand and Kabul.

Babur also proved to be an able adminstrator right from the beginning of his Indian campaign of conquest. Soon after the conquest of Bajaur, he appointed Khwaja Kalan to look after its administration. After a year, Khwaja Kalan was called back and Shah Mir Husain Qarluq was appointed in his place.[256] Similarly, after the occupation of Bhira, Hindu Beg was appointed there. Khushab was given to the governorship of Shah Hasan and Chenab was given to Husain Ikzak.[257] Even an envoy was despatched from Bhira to the court of Ibrahim Lodi.[258] Similarly, appointments were made after the conquest of Lahore, Dipalpur, Jalandhar and Sultanpur. Although, his conquest shortlived but it clearly indicated that Babur was quite serious in his Indian conquest. After gaining victory in the battle of Panipat, Babur took steps to consolidate his power in the regions once held by Ibrahim Lodi. He admitted in his service almost all those Afghan chiefs who agreed to accept his over lordship and also assigned them those territories which they already held under Ibrahim Lodi. He also appointed Wali Qizil as *shiqdar* and Dost Mughol as *diwan* to look after the administration of Delhi.[259]

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[256] Ibid., 1,pp.367-70& 422.
[257] Ibid., p.386.
[258] Ibid., pp.384-385.
[259] Ibid.,2, p.466.

3.4 Defiant Nobility and the Position of 'Sovereign'

Babur's conquest of Hindustan was still unfinished in 1526. Except Agra and Delhi, the rest of Hindustan was not under his sway. Besides, the hostility of the people of Agra and Delhi towards the Mughals and the rebellions in the surrounding areas further compounded his problems. Moreover, Babur had to face the discontent of his army who were not ready to stay in Hindustan anymore. Babur was greatly hurt with the attitude of his nobles especially of those whom he had raised to higher ranks. He expected atleast from them as he had mentioned in his memoirs, 'whatever I went these at my side would they be.' But it may be pointed out that attitude of the nobles was not rebellious, they refused to stay simply because they had no interest in Babur's enterprise –establishment of an empire in an alien land. But as mentioned above he had a well thought out plan of establishing an empire in India, and as the project was almost complete he was determined to fulfil at all cost. Babur's writes:

> On these accounts the greater part of the begs and best braves became unwilling to stay in Hindustan, indeed set their faces for leaving it. It is no reproach to old and experienced begs if they speak of such matters; even if they do so, this man (Babur) has enough sense and reason to get at what is honest or what is mutinous in their representations, to distinguish between loss and gain.... what recommends the expression of distasteful opinions by men of little tanding?....this last time of riding out from Kabul, a few men of little standard had just been made begs; what I looked for them was that if I went through fire and water and came out again, they

> would have gone in with me unhesitatingly, and with me have come out, that wherever I went, there at my side would they be,— not that they would speak against my purpose, not that they would turn back from any task or great affair on which, all counseling, all consenting, we had resolved, so long as the counsel was abandoned. Badly as these new beg behaved, Secretary Ahmadi and Treasurer Wali behaved still worse. Khwaja Kalan had done well in the march out from Kabul, in Ibrahim's defeat and until Agra was occupied; he had spoken bold words and shewn ambitious views. But a few days after the capture of Agra, all his views changed, —the one zealous for departure at any price was Khwaja Kalan.[260]

From the above, it becomes quite clear that Babur's nobles— both seniors and the ones raised by him to the status of *beg* at the time of his campaign to India were unwilling to stay in Hindustan. They were determined to leave India not as a part of any design against Babur but because of hot climate, unhospitable conditions and prolonged stay from their homes. The vast majority of nobles who accompanied Babur in the campaign probably never thought that Babur would establish an Empire in India. They thought like Amir Timur after the conquest, they will return to their homeland laden with huge booty. But Babur from the very beginning had other ideas. He was not satishfied with his position in Kabul but apparently he had not shared his views even with his close associates.

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[260] Ibid,2, p.524.

The departure of some of his close friends and associates created very dangerous situation for Babur. Although as mentioned above the vast majority of his army had stayed on. However, the departure of some very senior nobles and the information of Rana Sangram Singh's march towards Agra as the head of a large with a large army to confront him completely devastated Babur's army. In his memoirs, Babur writes about the state of affairs in his camp at this juncture. Babur himself was greatly perturbed by this action of Rana Sangram Singh. Babur writes:

> In these days, as has been mentioned, (our people) great and small, had been made very anxious and timid by past occurrences. No manly word or brave counsel was heard from any one so ever. What bold speech was there from the wazirs who are to speak out (dighuchi), or from the amirs who will devour the land (wilayat-yighuchi)? None had advice to give, none a bold plan of his own to expound.[261]

The situation was so bad that Babur was compelled to discuss the matter with his nobles. Nizamuddin writes that the vast majority of his nobles advised him to retire to Punjab with a great portion of the army after strengthening some of the forts and wait there for some supernatural power.[262]

In his memoirs, Babur also mentions that he summoned all '*begs*' and after a discussion he found that most of them were completely demoralised and were not

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[261] Ibid, p.556.

[262] Nizamuddin Ahmad, *Tabaqat-i Akbari*, Brajendra Nath De tr., 3 vols. Delhi : Low Price Publication, 1992, 2, pp.36-37.

prepared to fight against the Rajputs. Therefore, to raise their morale he made a spirited speech which run as follows:

> Begs and Braves! "Better than life with a bad name, is death with a good one. "God the most high has allotted to us such happiness and has created for us such good fortune that we die as martyrs, we kill as avengers of His cause. Therefore must each of you take oath upon His Holy Word that he will not think of turning his face from this foe, or withdraw from this deadly encounter so long as life is not rent from his body." All those present, beg and retainer, great and small, took the holy book joyfully into their hands and made vow and compact to this purport. The plan was perfect; it worked admirably for those near and afar, for seers and hearers, for friend and foe.[263]

Gulbadan Begum also writes that Babur addressed his *begs* and by his forceful pleadings convinced them for waging a war. She further adds that 'his army-men not only agreed to it but also swore by the divorce of their wives on the Holy book to fight till the last breath of their life.'[264]

The Nizamuddin Ahmad and Rizqullah Mushtaqi, the author of *Waqiat-i Mushtaqi* also give more or less the same version of this event but both of them assert that 'he gave a call for *Jehad.* Nizamuddin writes:

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[263] Babar, *Babarnama (Memoirs of Babar)*, 2, pp.556-557.
[264] Begum, *Humayunnama,* p. 99; Rushbrook William, *Empire Builder*, p.148.

> It is time that we should lay our hearts on martyrdom." And he gave a shout of "Jihad". Thus, all took oath on Holy book.[265]

Mushtaqi is more specific when he quotes Babur:

> I had to fight this battle against the infidels. Where should we go (avoiding the battle). If we achieve victory, we shall become Ghazi (holy warrior), otherwise we shall attain to martyrdom. It never behoves us that we shall attain to martyrdom. It never behoves us that we turn our back on the battle field." Then, took their oath on Holy *Quran.*[266]

To portray himself as a good Muslim and upholder of the *shariat,* just before the battle of Khanva he declared that he was giving up drinking of wine and all forbidden things such as gold and silver vassals were broken and distributed among needy which was also done by his followers.[267] Several other steps were also taken up in this direction at the same time. He remitted *tamgha* or stamp-tax to gain the favour of *Mussalmans.*[268]

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[265] Ahmad, *Tabaqat-i Akbari*, 2, pp.37-38.
[266] Shaikh Rizqullah Mushtaqui, *Waqiat-i Mushtaqi*, tr. I.H. Siddiqui , New Delhi: I.C.H.R, 1993, p.117.
[267] Babar, *Babarnama (Memoirs of Babar)*, 2, p.552; Begum, *Humayunnama*, pp.99-100.
[268] Begum, *Humayunnama*, pp.99-100; Mohibbul Hasan, p.89.

But it is quite significant to note that several local Muslim chiefs, inspite of Babur's attempt to declare this battle as a wai between infidels and Muslims, continued to support Rana Sangram Singh and were killed fighting against Babur's army. However, Babur after this victory assumed the title of *Ghazi*[269] and in the *fathnama* he was styled as *fath-i-padshah-i-Islam.*[270].

The victory at Khanva was of great significance— Rana Sanga's defeat in a way was practically the end of any formidable resistance from the side of Rajputs. And secondly, we find Babur for the first using a new tool 'religion' to garner the support of the Muslim including his own nobles under his leadership as a defender of the faith.

For the people of North India, these titles *(Ghazi, Padshah-I Islam)* were much more significant than a Timurid who was remembered here only as an invader failed to establish a strong dynasty. By adding these titles, his prestige as a ruler considerably improved among the contemporary ruling dynasties. However, he did not ignore to emphasise his Chinggisid-Timurid connection; after this victory he also assumed the title of *Khaqan.* Besides that, he still continued to give importance to *Tura-i Chinggisi.* In his memoirs, he remarked:

> Our forefathers through a long space of time, had respected the Chingiz-Tura (ordinance) doing nothing

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[269] Babar, *Babarnama (Memoirs of Babar)*,2, pp.559-560.
[270] Ibid., pp.574-575.

> opposed to it, whether in aseembly or court, in sittings down or rising ups. Though it has no divine authority so that a man obeys it of necessity, still good rules of conduct must be obeyed by whom-so ever they are left; just in the same way that, if a forefather have done ill, his ill must be changed for good.[271]

Apparently this positive refernce to *tura* could have been because of the presence of a number of his Mongol relations and over whelming number of Turanis in his ruing clas. However, now Babur came to realise that to establish a strong centralised empire in India and attain the position of a sovereign the total subordination of the nobility to the crown was of prime importance. His Central Asian nobility during his campaign had broadly cooperated with him but it seems he had doubts about their future behaviour especially after the campaigns of the conquest came to an end and the process of consolidation begins. Therefore, to counter them after Khanva, he decided to induct local elements in his nobility in a big way. All those Afghan chiefs who agreed to accept the subordination of the Mughals were not only admitted in service but were also confirmed in the areas which they had held earlier. Malik Dad Karrani, a prominent Afghan noble was not only pardoned but also assigned several parganas.[272] Several prominent Indian Muslims who enjoyed important position under the Lodis were also admitted in imperial service. Prominent among them were Shaikh Guran, Firoz Khan,

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[271] Ibid,1, pp.298-299.
[272] Ibid, 2, p.477; Afzal Husain, *The Nobility under Akbar and Jahangir,* p.2.

Mahmud Khan Nuhani, Qazi Zia, Shaikh Bayazid, Fath Khan Sarwani, Nizam Khan, Tatar Khan, Muhammad Zaitun were also taken into the service. Similarly, a number of local chiefs both Hindus and Muslims were also inducted in his ruling class such as Raja of Kahlur, Sangur Khan Janjuha and Adam Khan Ghakkar.[273] According to one study out of 116 nobles, 31 were Hindustani including Afghans and Shaikhzadas in Babur's nobilty.[274] Afghans however, enjoyed the pre-eminent position. They have considerable share in total i.e., 28.7%, out of which 41.7% was held by Farmulis and Nohanis.[275]

By admitting Indians in his nobility, Babur believed that on the one hand he will be able to win the support and goodwill of the local people for the Mughal Empire and on the other with their cooperation he would be able to counter any disruptive activities of his *Turani* nobles.

After achieving two great victories at Panipat and Khanva and having decided to establish an empire in India, Babur wanted to enjoy unrestrained powers of the king. Apparently as mentioned above, to achieve the objective he also tried to alter the composition of his nobility and introduced significant administrartive reforms. However, his Central Asian mind-set about the relations of his nobles with the emperor based on the *Tura-i Chinggisi* hampered the growth and development of a

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[273] Babar, *Babarnama (Memoirs of Babar)*, 2, pp.547-548; Abul Fazl, *Akbarnama*, 1, pp.195-196; A.R Khan, "Babur's Settlement of His Conquests in Hindustan, *IHC*, 1967, pp.207-20.
[274] Afzal Husain, *The Nobility Under Akbar and Jahangir*, p.4.
[275] Tej Ram, " Babur's relations with the Nohani and Farmuli Afghans: A Study of his Nobility (1526-30), *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 1980,p.231

strong monarchy. He still continued to invite nobles to advice him on important matters of state policies and sat with them in wine parties as friends. Not only that but also in his letters to Humayun, he asked him to seek the advice of wise and experienced begs (especially Kalan Beg) and call meetings of brothers and *begs* twice a day as a rule. He further advised him to call meeting for every business and settle every issue that came to him in agreement with his advisers.[276]

He still believed that the empire after him be divide among his sons, though the larger share should go to Humayun. Babur once said to have remarked: "the law had always been adhered to that when thou had six parts Kamran had five." This statement is certainly influenced by the Central Asian tradition ofdivision of the empire among sons. This desire of Babur in some was way obeyed by Humayun who after ascending the throne devided his empire among his brothers succeeded to the throne of industan after Babur's death in 1530. But this act of Humayun encouraged not only his brothers but also his other relations and a section of the nobility to challenge his position as an absolute soverign and on several occasions raised banner of revolt against his authority as will be discussed in the next section. He also came to the conclusion that for establishing a strong monarchy the principle of legitimacy was not enough. On the contrary he had seen that this principle had created more problems not only for him but to others also who were upholders of the principle of legitimacy. During his Indian conquest he laid more emphasis on the principle of 'justice' and as the defender and upholder of Islamic

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[276] Babar, *Babarnama (Memoirs of Babar)*, 2, p.627.

shariat. Of course, the principle of 'legitimacy' remained an important element in his theory of sovereignty. His Chinggisid-Timurid connection helped him to get support of a large number of his relatives and clans men in his campaigns inspite of his repeated failures in his early years and thereafter in his Indian campaign as a direct descendant of Timur.

CHAPTER–FOUR

Evolution of the Mughal Political Structure: The Reign of Humayun

Much of the predicament with the son and successor of Babur, Humayun is due to the analysis of his reign, both by the contemporary, as well as modern historians who seeks to examine the latter's reign, either from the perspective of a military leader Babur, or from the perspective of a well established 'sovereign', Akbar. Gulbadan Begum, for example, provides glaring insight into the reign of his brother Humayun, but apparently, while writing during the reign of Akbar, she had a model of a well-established monarchy to revert back for the reign of Humayun. Jouhar Aftabchi, an ewe-bearer of Humayun, most often looked at the reign of Humayun from a model of a military leader provided by Babur, and often laments on the latter's catastrophic political decisions. The totalizing effect of the modern studies based on such contemporary accounts has been to present before the posterity the reign of Humayun as a period of complete political and military disasters. This image of Humayun's reign persists because the sources for the study of his reign so far have not been critically analysed. Besides, it is also unfortunate that Humayun's reign is always compared with that Babur and Akbar and never individually; this had also coloured our estimate of Humayun.

Numerous researches in the recent years, no doubt, have questioned the validity of the studies conducted in isolation. However, such studies do affirm the need to

recognize the importance of the then socio-political circumstances of the time, which in any case necessitate and guide, as well as shape the destiny of a ruling monarch and his empire in any given time and space. For the reign of Humayun the above given analytical model assumes vital characteristics since it was a transitory phase in the annals of Mughal history in South Asia. The Mughal dominion in South Asia did move from its 'tribal' Central Asian characteristics under Humayun, but was yet to acquire the full-fledge status of an 'empire' emanating from an all powerful monarch, which was ever so evident during the reign of Akbar. The resulting confusion and political chaos so evident during the reign of Humayun, particularly military debacle at Chausa are all well-known hallmarks of a transitory phase, and, thus, needs to be studied carefully in its proper context. This chapter, thus, explores the reign of Humayun, the son and successor of Babur from the above methodology. The role played by his brothers, nobles and other factions in the political fate of the Mughals is analyzed from the point of view of predicaments of a political transitory phase.

4.1 Evolution of Kingship

During his brief rule of four years in Hindustan, Babur did try to give practicalities to his title of *Padishah*, trying to juggle between the political paradigms of 'legitimacy' and 'justice', only to find a bitter resentment among his nobles. To establish himself as an absolute ruler over a ruling class, which was predominantly *Turani* was a daunting task before Babur. However, he was able to achieve this position by conquering Hindustan. But as the large numbers of his nobles were still *Turanis,* the Timurid tradition of Kingship still remained dominant. Inspite of

Babur's nomination of Humayun as his successor, Mir Khalifa a senior noble of Babur opposed not only Humayun's nomination but also that of his other brothers, namely Kamran, Askari and Hindal[277] and conspired to enthrone Mahdi Khwaja the brother-in-law of Babur.[278] The precedence given to this person over the sons of Babur indicated that a few among the ruling class still strongly believed, as enshrined in the *yasa*, that empire belongs to the ruling family and not to the ruler. This completely undermined the right of the Emperor to nominate his successor. Although the conspiracy failed but it clealy indicated that in the ruling class there were still a sizeable number of nobles who were of the view that *Tura-i Chinggisi* should continue to guide the Emperor in dealing with the nobles and in other matters of governance. But this attempt of a very senior noble clearly indicates that on the issue of succession, the will of the dying king was not final.

However, the chroniclers by giving a description of Babur sacrificing his life for ailing Humayun still make an attempt to link the Mughal Empire in India to Central Asian monarchical traditions.[279] Babur had expressed his wish long before his death, to retire and to handover the kingdom to Humayun.[280] Gulbadan writes that Babur before his death called his chiefs and said:

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[277]Ahmad, *Tabaqat-i Akbari*, 2, p.42; Also see S. K. Banerjee, *Humayun Badshah*, London: Oxford University Press,1983.
[278] Banerjee, *Humayun Badshah*, 1, p.19. According to Nizamuddin Ahmad, Mahdi Khwaja was the son-in-law of Babur but Gulbadan Begum refers Mahdi Khwaja as his brother-in-Law, which seems more correct. See Begum, *Humayunnama*, p.128.
[279] From a page of chinggisid history where a similar incident is narrated about Chinggis Khan.
[280] Begum, *Humayunnama*, p.103.

> For years it has been in heart to make over my throne to Humayun Mirza and to retire........By the divine grace I have obtained all things but the fulfillment of this wish in health of body. Now, when illness has laid me low, I charge you all to acknowledge Humayun in my stead. Fail not in loyalty to him. Be of one heart and one mind with him. I hope to God that Humayun also will bear himself well towards men.[281]

Babur further said, "Humayun, I commit to God's keeping you and your brothers and all my kinsfolk and your brothers and all my kinsfolk and your people and my people; and all of these I confide to you."[282]

However, despite the wish of Babur, Humayun's accession was not easy. Initially, death of Babur was concealed by disguising another person which had Humayun's approval. Gulbadan Begam writes that on the suggestion of Araish Khan, an *amir* of Hind another person was disguised as Babur and was placed on the throne.[283]

It seems that because of these pressures Humayun agreed to divide his empire between his brothers. Although his sovereign status was not challenged by his brothers but it created different centres of powers. Kamran, who got the lion's

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[281] Ibid., pp.108-1C9.
[282] Ibid., p. 108.
[283] Ibid., p.109 mentions the incidence in the following words, "It is not well to keep the death secret, because when such misfortunes befall kings in Hindustan, it is the custom of the *bazar* people to rob and steal; God forbid that the Mughals not knowing, they should come and loot the houses and dwelling-places. It would be best to dress someone in red and, and to set him on an elephant, and to let him proclaim that the Emperor Babar had became a dervish and has given his throne to the Emperor Humayun.' This, his Majesty ordered to be done."

share in the division, became so ambitious that he captured almost the whole of Punjab and Humayun had to concede to his request to officially handover these territories.[284]

This action of Humayun on one hand indicated that he enjoyed complete authority as a ruler to assign territories to his brothers and nobles, and on the other, it also satisfied the ruling class because they realised that the Emperor had also considerations for Timurid traditions. This might have send signals across the *Turanis* that they have now a *Padishah* to reckon with, and not a military general that was dependent on the counsels of his lieutenants.

Soon after ascending the throne, Humayun started taking keen interest in the affairs of the state and as a first step decided to curb the activities of rebellious elements in his kingdom. The leadership shown by Humayun in curbing the rebellions of Afghans, as well as, capturing the fort of Chunar from Jalal Khan, the son of Sher Khan, apparently showed advancement over the status of *Padishah* that was achieved by Babur. Soon thereafter he decided to capture Gujarat, because the ruler of the kingdom Bahadur Shah had been giving shelter to Afghan rebels and other Mughal nobles who rebelled. He had become very ambitious and with the support of these elements was conspiring to launch an attack on Mughal

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[284] Mewat was conferred on Mirza Hindal; and the Punjab, Kabul and Qandahar to Mirza Kamran; and Sambhal was conferred on Mirza Askari. See Ahmad, *Tabaqat-i Akbari.*, 2, p.45; Abul Fazl, *Akbarnama.*, 1, p.151 where Abul Fazl mentions Alwar instead of Mewat and Badakhshan according to him was given to Mirza Sulaiman; Ishwari Prasad, *The Life and Times of Humayun,*Calcutta: Orient Longman, 1955, p.42; Banerjee, *Humayun Badshah,* 1, p.28.

possessions. The Gujarat campaign of Humayun was a grand success. During the campaign Humayun showed his competence as great military commander and like a 'sovereign', subdued the country of Ahmadabad, while at the same time also dividing whole of Gujarat to his men.[285] The subjugation of Ahmadabad and its annexation signaled that the concept of 'sovereign' was gradually evolving. The powerful position, as well as stature occupied by Humayun did neutralize, at least to an extent, the defiant nobility, which now for some time have been creating hindrances in the path towards attaining a 'sovereign' status and position. The annexation of Gujarat was done against the advice and wishes of the *Turani* military leaders. Seldom previously Babur managed to act against the counsel of his military commanders, despite proclaiming himself as *Padishah*.

After the conquest of Ahmedabad, it was annexed in the Empire, although majority of the nobles were against this move. Here again Humayun strongly asserted his position as an absolute sovereign taking decision independently which in his view was in the best interest of the Empire.

If the conquest of Gujarat was a feather in his cap, its collapse was equally a great set back to his power and position as a sovereign. Thus, the annexation of Gujarat and that too against the general advice reaffirms the position and direction towards which the concept of Mughal 'sovereign' was progressing. It was the necessary

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[285] Ahmadabad was bestowed on Mirza Askari and Patan on Yadgar Nasir Mirza. According to Nizam-ud-din, Bahruch was given to Mir Hindu Beg and Baroda to Qasim Husain Sultan and Champener on Tardi Beg, but according to Gulbadan, Bahruch was conferred on Qasim Husain Sultan. See, Begum, *Humayunnama*, pp 131-132

step taken by Humayun as the court of Gujarat by this time had the notorious position of providing refuge for the trouble makers of the Mughal dynasty.[286] The parcelling of different territories of Gujarat among his men apparently was also an attempt to carve out some sort of political system, which for some reasons could not be achieved by Babur.[287]

After returning to Delhi, however, when he came to know of the aggressive designs of Sher Khan, he again moved to swiftly to take action against him. Humayun at this juncture is said to have remarked, "The insolence of these Afghans exceeds all bounds; let us go and take Chunar from them".[288] This is indicative of the fact that even after the Gujarat disaster, Humayun was not only confident of his military leadership but also of his nobility. The step above could only have been taken if the king is assured of his following and status, which for Humayun at this time seemingly was not a problem. On this strong note of confidence, it was not difficult for Humayun to conquer the fort of Chunar after which he conferred a number of promotions and bestowed honorary dresses on all chiefs.[289] These measures were like a 'sovereign', would do under these circumstances. It does not, thus appear that Humayun was under any sort of pressure, and the newly carved Mughal dominion in South Asia, was progressing

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[286] Ishwari Prasad, *The Life and Times of Humayun*, p.67.

[287] Jouher Aftabchi, *The Tezkereh al Vakiat or Private Memoirs of the Moghul Emperor Humayun*, Major Charles Stewart trans., Delhi: Idarah-i adabyiat-i Delhi, 1972 p.6.

[288] Aftabchi, *The Tezkereh al Vakiat or Private Memoirs of the Moghul Emperor Humayun*, p.9.

[289] Ibid., p.10 ; Begum, *Humayunnama*, p.133.

rapidly towards giving practical shapes to the mere theoretical adoption of the title of *Padishah* by Babur.

Humayun as a powerful king also conveyed a strong message to Sher Khan through his ambassador asking him to send the umbrella, the throne, and the treasure of Bengal to him. He further asked Sher Khan to surrender the insignia of royalty and in exchange was offered any assignment of his choice.[290] Given the growing powers of Sher Khan by this time, it was a strong step taken by Humayun. Moreover, by asking the umbrella and throne of Bengal, Humayun was reiterating his status as the *Padishah* of Hindustan, and thus, justifying his claims to the insignia of royalty of small principalities. Symbolically, he also indirectly conveyed to Sher Khan, that he is not a *Padishah*. This strong message sent to Sher Khan further indicates Humayun's assertion of his authority as the ruler of Hindustan. It may also be pointed out that by and large the nobility also fully supported him in his entire campaign. The capture of Gaur further strengthened his position, and during his stay at Gaur it is alleged that he even claimed divine status. He generally distanced himself from the nobles and used to put a veil on his face. Whenever he appeared in public and removed his veil, the nobles used to say, "Light has shown forth".[291]

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[290] Aftabchi, *The Tezkereh al Vakiat or Private Memoirs of the Moghul Emperor Humayun*, pp.11-12; Begum, *Humayunnama*, p.133; Ishwari Prasad, *The Life and Times of Humayun*, p.119; Banerjee, *Humayun Badshah*, 2, pp.204-205.

[291] Abdul Qadir Badaoni, *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh*, tr. W. H. Lowe, 2 vols., Karachi: Karimsons, 1976, 2, p.573.

It is well-known that Humayun's long stay in Bengal completely cut him off from his officials and led to negligence of the official business. On the other hand, Sher Khan continued to make arrangement to counter attack the Mughal position all along the route from Bengal to Jaunpur. Having come to know of these moves of Sher Khan the officials pressed Humayun to take action. The first important task before Humayun was to make a settlement of Bengal and to find a competent officer to look after affairs of Bengal. The situation in Bengal had gone so bad that Zahid Beg who was appointed to administer Bengal refused to accept it saying that the emperor could not find some place more pleasant than Bengal in which to do away with him. Thereafter, Jahangir Quli Beg with 5,000 horses was given the charge of Bengal and Humayun started towards Delhi.[292] The returning journey of Humayun was complete disaster. Sher Khan completely defeated him at Chausa and the grand Mughal army perished. The Mughal Emperor himself was able to save his life with great difficulty. Humayun reached Agra only with handful of his soldiers. On his arrival, Kamran who was already in Agra met him with all sincerity and even offered to lead a campaign against Sher Khan. But Humayun, restrained him by saying, "No Sher Khan, defeated me, and I will have revenge of him."[293]

It is rather difficult to explain this particular act of Humayun, but keeping in view such other actions it may be suggested that he wanted to raise the position of the

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[292] Aftabchi, *The Tezkereh al Vakiat or Private Memoirs of the Moghul Emperor Humayun*, p.31; Abul Fazl, *Akbarnama*, 1, p.341; Ishwari Prasad, *The Life And Times of Humayun*, pp. 125-126.
[293] Aftabchi, *The Tezkereh al Vakiat or Private memoirs of the Moghul Emperor Humayun*, p.20.

sovereign. The principle of legitimacy had started creating problem for him; not only his brothers, several other Timurids such as *Mirzas* were challenging his position. His brothers, especially Kamran and Askari who on occasions challenged his position, were never able to get enough support to dislodge him.

But with the defeat of grand Mughal army at Chausa, Humayun lost the confidence of his nobility. Serious doubts were raised about his competence to defeat Sher Khan in the ensuing battle. Differences also arose between Kamran and Humayun and the former left Agra just before the battle of Kannauj with his entire army, leaving only a thousand troopers despite Humayun's pleadings. There was so much confusion in the Mughal camp at Agra that a large number of nobles sent their families along with Kamran. Sher Khan after his victory at Chausa crowned himself as *Padishah* of Hindustan and swiftly moved towards Agra to dislodge Humayun. In these adverse circumstances, Humayun fought a battle at Kannauj but once again he was completely defeated. After this defeat the nobles completely lost confidence in Humayun.

Thus, it is quite evident from the above review that Humayun during his initial ten years of rule did his best to exert his power and status among his nobles, as well as among other local chiefs and *Rajas*. No where it was evident, that he was reluctant in taking military expeditions and in the conquest of other areas. His efforts to brush aside the opinions of his nobles, especially *Turanis* did in fact promote his cause of a 'sovereign' ruler.

4.2 Organization of Administration: The Pre-rogatives of a 'Sovereign'

During the first ten years of his reign, Humayun not only acted as independent and powerful ruler but also was, to an extent, able to counter the principle of 'blood and legitimacy' which provided a sort of autonomy to the nobles, especially the male members of the ruling house. From time to time, Humayun bestowed grants, titles, awards and positions to his nobles. Although these bestowments were not on a considerable level, yet they point towards the fact that gradually the concept of Mughal kingship was evolving and the powers of a 'sovereign' was widening.

We may recall here the distribution of the territories of Gujarat by Humayun to his men, as well as award of dresses of honour and gifts after the victory at Chunar.[294] On the one hand, these conferments were aimed at encouraging Humayun's nobilty for performing valiantly and loyally, and on the other hand they also implied to the nobles that there is a sovereign who rewards them for performing loyally. It helped in strengthening Humayun's position as a 'sovereign' among his nobles.

In a similar stride, after the conquest of Gaur, the capital of Bengal, Humayun divided the province among his officers.[295] This was an event of extreme importance. It appears that the division of the province of Bengal into assignments was an attempt on the part of Humayun to organize some sort of administration.

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[294] See Begum, *Humayunnama*, p.133.
[295] Aftabchi, *The Tezkereh al Vakiat or Private Memoirs of the Moghul Emperor Humayun*, p.13.

Prior to this, there was hardly any attempt to organize the administration, although the concept of a *Padishah* was gradually evolving. Since the assignment system, as we understand it today, was both administrative and financial system, it appears that Humayun had started to organize his administration, as well as finances. Moreover, the appointment of Jahangir Quli as the governor of Bengal also points towards the fact that Humayun was indeed taking measures to organize his administration. Thus, the claim that Humayun was not an administrator is hardly borne out of fact. Around 1540, before the battle of Kannauj Humayun bestowed ranks and titles on all his principal officers and after his loss also did not hesitate to promote the officers. Similarly, Humayun promoted Bukshi Langha, a powerful *zamindar* with the title of *Khan-i Jahan.*[296] Even he sent him banner and kettle drums, a horse and a head-to-foot dress, and in return asked for boats and corn.[297]

The period of Humayun's stay in Bengal when he mostly shut himself up in his palace and withdrew from most of his nobles could also be understood as an administrative measure. Two of his measures during this period are recorded. One in which, he posed as the chief Muslim power and assessed the relative strength of the other Muslim kings. The other interesting manifestation of his idea was seen at Gaur, where he used to put a veil over his crown, and when he removed it, the

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[296] Ibid., pp.28-29.
[297] Begum, *Humayunnama*, p.148.

people used to say, "Light has shone forth!"[298] This expression led some people to believe that Humayun claimed divinity.[299] It is also said that in Persia, he was taunted for his pretensions.[300]

Humayun also attempted several innovations, mainly to strengthen his position. Around 1533, he divided all his officials into three classes named as *Ahl-i Daulat*, *Ahl-i Saadat*, and *Ahl-i Murad*. The Emperor's brothers, relatives, his officers (*umara*), his ministers (*wazirs*) and his soldiers were termed as *Ahl-i Daulat*. The holy persons, the great *sheikhs, sayyids, qadis*, philosophers, poets, the judges, the nobles and worty people were called *Ahl-i Saadat* while young and handsome men, clever musicians and sweet singers were classed as *Ahl-i Murad*. Days of the week were divided and were allotted to these departments.[301]

Khwand Amir also records another system of categorization of these three departments of the nobility, including King. He believed that just as the Sun was the centre of the material world, similarly the King, whose destiny was closely associated with the great luminary, was the centre of the human world. The servants of the state were divided into twelve classes, each class being indicated by an arrow of which he himself was the centre. The twelfth arrow, made of the purest gold, was reserved for the quiver of the King and no one else was to share it

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[298] Abdul Qadir Badaoni, *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh*, 2, p.573.
[299] R.P Tripathi, *Some Aspects of Muslim Administration*, p.117; Banerjee, *Humayun Badshah*, 2, p.335.
[300] Cited from R.P Tripathi, *Some Aspects of Muslim Administration*, p.117.
[301] Khwandmir, *Qanun-i Humayuni*, pp.25-26.

with him, the eleventh for his brothers and other relations and those nobles who bore the title of *sultan*; the tenth for the *sheikh* and other learned *sayyids*, the ninth for the great nobles, the eighth for the intimate courtiers, the seventh for other officers, the sixth for the head of the Afghan clan and the Uzbeks, the fifth for the military officers, the fourth for the treasurers, the third for the soldiers, the second for the menial servants, and the first for the watch man and the camel drivers. Each class had the possession of these arrows, one being granted to the highest member, another to the middle and the third to the lowest.[302] Another innovation of Humayun was attempted towards re-organization of administrative affairs. He divided the entire administration or administrative divisions into four departments, corresponding to the four elements, viz., the *atashi* (fire), the *hawai* (air), the *abi* (water), and the *khaki* (earth) and appointed a minister for each of the department.[303]

Humayun also introduced the system of wearing of different dresses for the different days of the week. [304] As Humayun once in the hour of victory wore a red robe for three days to express his rage and ordered city of Mandu to be plundered. On the fourth day, he changed his dress into green after listening to ustad Manjhu, the musician.[305]

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[302] Khwandmir, *Qanun-i Humayuni*, pp.31-32; R.P Tripathi, *Some Aspects of Muslim Administration*, pp.116-117; Banerjee, *Humayun Badshah*, 2, pp.336-337.
[303] Khwandmir, *Qanun-i Humayuni*, p.35; Banerjee, *Humayun Badshah*, 2, pp.336-337.
[304] Ibid., pp.51-53.
[305] Banerjee, *Humayun Badshah*, 1, p.134 and 2, p.338; Ishwari Prasad, *The Life and Times of Humayun*, p.76.

The conferring of titles and ranks on the days of festivities, as practised by the Kings of Persia, was also adopted by Humayun. On the occasion of *Nauroz* (Persian New Year), Jalal Khan was granted the colours and kettle drums.[306] Kettle drums, usually the prerogative of a king, were also given to the most trusted servants. Symbolically, it confirmed the status of a 'sovereign'which had the rights to bestow these high favours on the nobles. Similarly, Nadim Beg the husband of the favourite foster mother of Akbar, Maham Anga, on the same day was given the King's seal.[307] In the same fashion, other nobles were rewarded with the titles.

It is significant to note that it was Humayun who introduced weighing ceremony of the sovereign on his birthday in 1534 A.D.[308] He was the one who introduced *taslim* and *kornish.*[309]

Another important innovation of *Bishat-i-Nishat* (carpet of mirth) done by him needs to be discussed in detail as well. It was a round carpet divided into circles of different colours corresponding to the orbits of the planets, and the number of elemental spheres, and was made of valuable stuff. Gold colour circle was reserved for the Emperor to represent himself as the 'centre of power', like Sun. Each section of the people was made to sit in accordance with one of the seven planets appropriate to it, in the circle to which it corresponds. Each of the seven

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[306] Khwandmir, *Qanun-i Humayuni*, p.70.
[307] Ibid.,70.
[308] Khwandmir, *Qanun-i Humayuni*, p.74.
[309] Banerjee, *Humayun Badshah*,2, p.342.

circles was further divided into two hundred grades, so that there are fourteen hundred seats in total.[310]

All these innovations were aimed at elevating the position of king among his nobles and the members of his house. A minute analysis of the above reforms of Humayun actually confirms that under the given political circumstances they helped in elevating the position of king among various other ambitious nobles who probably wanted to share the powers with the king.

Thus, by 1540 Humayun through his military conducts and other symbolic acts did try to give a shape and meaning, not only to Mughal kingship but also to Mughal administration. Despite the claims in some of the modern text books that Humayun was not an administrator, or for that matter, had little time or genius to organize his administration is hardly supported by evidences.

4.3 The Brawl for Power and the Clash of Interests

During 1530-1540, while Humayun was trying to give meaning to his appellation of a *Padishah*, his efforts were continuously challenged by his ambitious and stubborn *Turani* chiefs. After the conquest of Gujrat, the nobles instigated Prince Askari after their counsel of handing over Gujarat to Sultan Bahadur as its deputy was turned down by Humayun. Aftabchi writes:

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[310] Khwandmir, *Qanun-i Humayuni*, p.80-81; Abul Fazl, *Akbarnama*, 1, pp.649-650.

> When the counsellors found that the King was displeased, and would not listen to their advice, they instigated Prince Askari to march off with his division of army, and to give out that he was going to seize upon the province of Delhi.[311]

This is also corroborated by Nizamuddin Ahmad that Amir Hindu beg incited Mirza Askari to have the public prayer read and coin struck in his own name to which Mirza have not agreed.[312] This is perhaps not the only evidence to prove that the nobles were provocative enough to gain their ends but there are many other examples which show their seditious nature on different occasion. When Mirza Askari arrived near Champener, Tardi beg who was posted there shut himself in the fort and sent message to the Emperor that Askari is hostile and keen to take Agra and to become emperor.[313]

About the same time, Muhammad Zaman Mirza, taking advantage of Emperor's absence from the capital, rebelled.[314] Muhammad Zaman Mirza was the grandson of Sultan Husain of Herat, and married his cousin Masuma, a stepsister of Humayun and showed himself as a capable general in Babur's campaign.[315] He being a descendant of Timur, thus, claimed blood relationship with the 'House of Humayun'. J ouhar Aftabchi writes:

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[311] Aftabchi, *The Tezkereh al Vakiat or Private Memoirs of the Moghul Emperor Humayun*, pp.6-7.
[312] *Ahmad, Tabaqat-i Akbari,* 2, p.60.
[313] Ibid., p.61.
[314] Ibid., p.65.
[315] S.R. Sharma, *Mughal Empire in India,* Agra: Educational Publishers, 1934, p.38.

> During the period that the King was employed in subduing the province of Gujarat, Muhammad Zaman Sultan, (a descendant of Timur, and favourite of the late Emperor) taking advantage of his majesty's absence, gained possession of the countries situated on the north-east side of the Ganges, and fixed his own residence at Belgram, but dispatched his son Aleg Mirza, with a considerable force to seize on the provinces of Jaunpur, Kurra and Manikpur.[316]

Thus, it is not as if Humayun's efforts were going unnoticed or unchallenged. It again goes to his credit that despite the hostilities shown by his chiefs, as well as by other adversaries, Humayun was gradually exerting his position. His pardoning of Muhammad Sultan and other chiefs could be well understood in the light of above circumstances, where despite all odds Humayun was trying to exert his position. Naturally, pardon was a king's prerogative to win over the seditious section of people.

The incident after the conquest of Bengal evidently points towards the solemnity of the predicament, the clash of the interests of Humayun as a *Padishah*, and his nobles, as well as latter's enduring efforts towards attaining absolute power and status. Humayun, after much deliberation, reached at the conclusion of appointing

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[316] Aftabchi, *The Tezkereh al Vakiat or Private memoirs of the Moghul Emperor Humayun*, p.7; Also see, Begum, *Humayunnama*, p.112.

Zahid Khan, who for long has been expecting promotion, as the governor of Bengal. However, the nobility, so used to disobeying the commands of emperors that Zahid Khan plainly refused the offer.[317] However, Humayun, it appears was not prepared to let the matter pass, as would have normally happened during the reign of Babur. Instead, Humayun showed extreme anger and ordered for Zahid Khan's execution. The latter finding shelter and ultimate intercession from the *harem* could not also change Humayun's decision and was forced to take refuge in Agra, where Mirza Hindal was present.[318] According to the testimony of Gulbadan Begum, this person was one among those who incited Hindal to rebel against Humayun.[319] Despite the displeasure shown by the nobility towards the annexation of Champaner, Humayun preferred to annex Gujarat and appointed Tardi Beg as its governor.[320] Hindal had already shown signs of dissension, while Kamran could hardly be trusted. Mirza Askari in state of drunkenness referred himself as *Padishah* and when objected by Ghazanfar (his foster brother), Mirza Askari put him in prison. But he anyhow escaped to Sultan Bahadur and gave clue of the internal condition of the Mughals who were keen to go back from Gujarat on the very first opportunity.[321] His nobles went a step further and tried to instigate Askari to march off with his division. Moreover, Yadgar Nasir Mirza went to Champaner secretly to covet it but Terdi Beg refused to comply with him and sent

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[317] Aftabchi, *The Tezkereh al Vakiat or Private Memoirs of the Moghul Emperor Humayun*, p.31; Abul Fazl, *Akbarnama*, 1, p.341; Ishwari Prasad, *The Life And Times of Humayun*, pp. 125-126.
[318] Aftabchi, *The Tezkereh al Vakiat or Private Memoirs of the Moghul Emperor Humayun*, p.31.
[319] Begum, *Humayunnama*, p.134; Ahmad, *Tabaqat-i Akbari*,2, p.66.
[320] Aftabchi, *The Tezkereh al Vakiat or Private Memoirs of the Moghul Emperor Humayun*, p.6.
[321] Ahmad, *Tabaqat-i Akbari*, 2, p.59.

the information to Humayun.[322] Prince Askari, on whom the Emperor relied too, provided him respite from the nuisance of Sher Khan but asked for a price when he should have done it as a duty.[323]

The circumstances were, however, moving differently—— indifferent to the causes of Humayun. Sher Khan remained defiant and proclaimed himself as the *Padishah*.[324] The nobles of Humayun were apathetic owing to their declining status and position, manifested in their counsel being repeatedly turned down by the powerful growing Emperor. Under these difficult circumstances and in the battle of nerves, Humayun seemed to have lost some focus. He now began to turn for counsels from his nobles. Defeat at the hands of Sher Khan made Humayun more vulnerable to the counsels, rather than taking independent decisions. At every stage when Sher Khan was making inroads, Humayun was calling upon his nobles to form unanimous mode of action.[325]

Apparently, this might appear to be a strategically wrong move on the part of Humayun. However, given the situation when adversaries occupied a strong hold, it was best to win over the nobility by making them feel important, which under the given circumstances could easily be achieved by asking their counsel. This is what Humayun exactly did. Before making any important move or before taking any important decision Humayun ensured that every one of his nobles was taken

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[322] Ibid., p.7.
[323] Aftabchi, *The Tezkereh al Vakiat or Private Memoirs of the Moghul Emperor Humayun*, pp.14-15.
[324] Ibid., p.15.
[325] Aftabchi, *The Tezkereh al Vakiat or Private Memoirs of the Moghul Emperor Humayun*, pp.15-16.

into confidence. It was probably owing to this that the humiliating treaty of Bengal with Sher Khan was concluded. In this connection Jouhar writes, "At first the King would not consent to this measure, but at length was obliged to comply with his insolent demands, and peace was accordingly concluded."[326]

But the situation in the camp became so bad that Humayun's brother's and nobles started to quarrel with each other for extremely trivial matters. Much of this quarrel was owing to ego and self pride. Yadgar Mirza and Askari, for example, physically intimidated each other, while after suffering humiliating defeat from Sher Khan the army was returning to Agra. The overall condition of Humayun, and the entire situation, as elucidated above, is most brilliantly summed up in the words of Humayun himself. On hearing the fight between Yadgar Mirza and Askari on the issue of chasing the robbers, Humayun remarked,

> They better have vented their spite on the robbers than on each other, what has happened cannot be recalled, but let us hear no more of it.[327]

To add insult to the injury, an attempt to murder Humayun also took place.[328] Kamran also decided to return to Lahore.[329] Prince Hindal and Yadgar Mirza

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[326] It was probably owing to these bad counsels that this treaty was concluded when Mughals had an edge. Chunar, ultimately was given back to Sher Khan; See Aftabchi, *The Tezkereh al Vakiat or Private Memoirs of the Moghul Emperor Humayun*, p.17.
[327] Aftabchi, *The Tezkereh al Vakiat or Private Memoirs of the Moghul Emperor Humayun*, p.23.
[328] Ibid., p.24.
[329] Ahmad, *Tabaqat-i Akbari*, 2, p.71.

quitted the army.[330] While Humayun was struggling to cope with Sher Khan, a large number of nobles and the switching loyalties of his nobles, Shah Husain Sultan of Thatta revolted and also assumed the title of *Padishah*.[331] He was also a descendant of Timur.

Two successive defeats at the hands of Sher Khan along with quarrel between the Princes, and desertion of the nobility—— gave a tremendous jolt to the confidence of Humayun. He started to lose control over the situation. The experienced campaigner like Tardi Beg and Munim Khan could have been of some assistance to him but they also behaved indifferently. On a number of occasions where these two senior campaigners, not only fought with each other, but also did not leave any stone unturned to humiliate their emperor Humayun. Tardi Beg, for example, refused to lend his horse to Humayun, and at another place refused to lend his boat.[332]

All the initiatives taken by him to streamline the administration or strengthen the position of the king had collapsed. The priorities now began to change drastically as Humayun, who earlier was acting independently and taking bold initiatives, was now struggling to survive. He had hardly any money to pay to his army and

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[330] Aftabchi, *The Tezkereh al Vakiat or Private Memoirs of the Moghul Emperor Humayun*, p.27.
[331] Ibid., p.29.
[332] Aftabchi, *The Tezkereh al Vakiat or Private Memoirs of the Moghul Emperor Humayun*, p.33.

consequently most of them have left him. Humayun made a Mughal write off his debt by providing him water.[333]

During this period of grave crisis the Mughal *harem* as an institution also tried to exert its influence. It has already been discussed how the *harem* interceded for Zahid Khan but was firmly dealt with by Humayun. However, things were different now as Humayun was not at all powerful. His liking for Hamida Banu, whom he saw at Hindal's house, initiated resentment not only from the lady, but also from Hindal.[334] Earlier, Yadgar Mirza allegedly supported Shah Husain of Thatta on the promise of the marriage of latter's daughter with him.[335] These growing insinuations of *harem* into politics had far reaching implications in the annals of Mughal history, particularly in the evolution of the structure of Mughal polity, as will be discussed at appropriate places.

4.4 The Wandering 'Sovereign': Persian Insinuation on Mughal Re-conquest of Status and Territories

The Mughal concept of 'sovereignty' and efforts of its emperor Humayun towards the 'evolution' of some sort of political structure received serious set back after military debacles and political blunders, especially after the defeat at Chausa. Stressed out by the attitude of his brothers and kinsmen, as well as by the military

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[333] Ibid,p.37.
[334] Aftabchi, *The Tezkereh al Vakiat or Private Memoirs of the Moghul Emperor Humayun*, p.31.
[335] Ibid., pp.34-35.

losses, Humayun was forced to leave Hindustan. He was even refused to pass through Kabul by Kamran on the pretext that it was given by Babur to his mother.[336] The second blow to him was that his name was dropped from the *khutba* at Qandahar by Hindal on the insistence of Kamran.[337] Within a span of few years an apparently strong military leader, Humayun began to show signs of feebleness, manifested not only in frequent counsels being sought before making any important move, but on occasion even compromising his position as a 'sovereign'. One might, for instance cite the attitude of his senior noble Tardi Beg during the days of wandering when the latter refused to provide water to royal horses, or for that matter Rushan Kuka who demanded back his horse from Hamida Banu, which he had earlier lent.[338]

If these two instances do not highlight the true impact of the loss of prestige, status, honour and position of 'sovereign' after the defeat from Afghans, the very fact that Mirza Askari was sent by Mirza Kamran to imprison Humayun at Qandhar might well do. The desolate *Padishah* had to abandon his infant son Akbar and was forced to move into Persian territories.

Humayun's stay in Persia, courtesy to the hospitality of Shah, not only provided much needed respite to Humayun, but also changed the course, trajectory, as well as complexion of Mughal political structure.

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[336] Begum, *Humayunnama*, p.147.
[337] Ibid., pp.161-162.
[338] Ahmad, *Tabaqat-i Akbari*, 2, p.86.

The polity, as it evolved and developed after Humayun's re-conquest of Hindustan took concrete shapes under his son and successor Akbar, and found permanency for at least until the end of the reign of Shah Jahan in 1658. This section explores the importance of Humayun's stay in Persia in the over-all evolution of Mughal political structure. However, before reaching any conclusions, some important aspects needs to be considered. What was the status of a wandering erstwhile Sunni Mughal 'sovereign' in Shia Persia? Why Shah Tahmasp extended his support to Humayun? Where were Kamran and the issue of the tussle for Qandhar placed? What Persian insinuation did Humayun carry with him to Hindustan? An attempt will be made to find answers to some of these questions which might be helpful in assessing the comprehensive impact of Humayun's stay in Persia.

All the three historians, namely Jouhar Aftabchi, Bayazid Bayat and Gulbadan Begum speaks in very clear terms that Humayun was accorded a very high status in Persia by Shah Tahmasp right from the time when the former entered Herat. If Jouhar is to be believed then Shah Tahmasp had written to every person of the city of Herat to welcome Humayun.[339] At Herat, a large crowd led by Prince Sultan Muhammad, the eighth son of Shah Tahmasp, welcomed Humayun, with the directions that Humayun should proceed to Mashhad to meet Shah.

[339] Aftabchi, *The Tezkereh al Vakiat or Private Memoirs of the Moghul Emperor Humayun*, p.59; Sukumar Ray, *Humayun in Persia*, Calcutta: The Asiatic Society, 2002, pp. 8-9.

Humayun Finally met Shah Tahmasp, but not at Mashshad. Time and again letters came arriving to Humayun to proceed to different cities in order to meet Shah. Thus, Humayun had to travel to Mashhad and then to Qazvin through major cities of Persia, like Nishapur, Subzwar and Ders.[340] Humayun spent ample time in these cities where he not only witnessed the prosperity of the dominions of Shah of Persia, but also his grand following among the masses.

There could be many reasons as to why the meeting between Shah and Humayun was delayed for such a long time, and why the venue kept on changing. It might be because perhaps Shah wanted to give some rest to Humayun after knowing about his recent difficult times, or perhaps he wanted Humayun to get himself accustomed to Persian Shia tradition, or may be he wanted to exhibit his power and status to the Sunni Mughal Humayun, the emperor of allegedly vast territories and richness, which the latter could not hold. It might have awed the 'sovereign' Humayun and also might have helped in acknowledging the superior status of a Persian *Padishah* over wandering Mughal 'sovereign'. These prepositions are not hard to digest once we consider the recent past of the relationship of these two dynasties.

Besides adherents of two conflicting sects of Islam, Shiism and Sunnism, the Persians and the Mughals were also rivals in the contest of the prestigious Central

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[340] Aftabchi, *The Tezkereh al Vakiat or Private Memoirs of the Moghul Emperor Humayun*, pp.59-61.

Asian lands. The changing fortune of the Uzbeks, Ottomans, Persians and Mughals for the dominance of Central Asia was one of prestige and honour for different sovereigns. What united the other three dynasties against the Persian dynasty was there adherence to *Sunnism*. The Chaghtai Mughals, under Babur were relatively less powerful and less uncompromising, which sometimes resulted in the joined action of the two against others. At other times, however, when the opportunities permitted, both of them never left any stone unturned to humiliate each other. One might recall here the alliance between Babar and Shah Ismail in the battle of Ghazdwan where Persians under Najm Thani was badly defeated. The Persians ascribed this defeat to the treachery of Babar.[341] This according to Jouhar was one of the reasons that sour the relationship between Humayun and Shah Tahmasp.

After the conquest of Hindustan by Babar, Qandhar served as a boundary line not only between the Mughals and the Persians, but also between the Shia Sistan and Sunni Khurasan regions. Thus, both looked to take possession of it. At the time of Babar's death, Qandhar and Kabul were under the Mughals, held and managed by Mirza Kamran. There were at least two Persian attacks on Qandhar during 1536 and 1537, the earlier one by Sam Mirza, the son of Shah and the later by Shah

[341]Aftabchi, *The Tezkereh al Vakiat or Private Memoirs of the Moghul Emperor Humayun*, p.69; Also see Ishwari Prasad, *The Life and Times of Humayun*, p.2; Sukumar Ray, *Humayun in Persia*. p.27.

Tahmasp himself.[342] Mirza Haider Dughlat narrates the importance of Qandhar in the following word:

> It was this Shah Tahmasp who, whenever he made war upon Khorasan met with such determined opposition from the Uzbegs under Ubaidullah Khan, and such overpowering resistance from their numerous forces, that he was always compelled to retreat.[343]

Despite gaining victory in his second attempt, Shah Tahmasp had to give up Qandhar to Mirza Kamran, as the latter was not hoped to help Shah against the Uzbegs.[344]

The conflict within the Mughal household and defeat from an external Afghan, which forced Humayun to proceed towards Sistan provided an opportunity to Shah Tahmasp to exhibit his grandeur and power to the Mughal 'sovereign' who once defeated him now was at his mercy. Consider the places where Humayun moved before meeting Shah Tahmasp. Jouhar provides the name of at least three other important cultural and political centers of Persia en-route to Qazwin, namely Herat, Mashad and Nishapur. All these four places were the cultural centers of Persia, a symbolism of Shia faith where Shah was not only a *Padishah,* but also a religious head. As compared to this, the Mughal 'sovereign' who defeated the Shah was not

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[342] Mirza Haider Dughlat, *Tarikh-i Rashidi,* p.468.
[343] Ibid
[344] Ibid., p.469.

only defeated by the Afghans, but also was continuously disobeyed by his nobles, including his own brothers. Besides, at every place in Persia all the grandees of the empire came out to receive Humayun and showed every respect to him. Probably, this was also aimed at exhibiting the superior status and following of a Persian *Padishah* over a Mughal 'sovereign' who hardly had any following.

After the meeting with the Shah, where Humayun was shown high respects and was seated on the same cushion, many *qamarguha* hunts were organized. It was common practice among Mongols, of whom the Mughals were a branch, to go on hunting expeditions, which served many purposes. Often, it was to maintain essential supplies, or suppress rebellions, or for training, or even as only a pleasure pursuit.[345] However, on these occasions, the hunting served not only as a medium to exhibit Shah's superior military and shooting skills but also to test that of Humayun's. An important incidenct at hunting related by Jouhar, probably confirms the above hypothesis. Jouhar writes:

[345] For example see Anand S. Pandian, "Predatory Care: The Imperial Hunt in Mughal and British India."

> The next morning the King (Humayun) again joined the hunters, and, having proceeded to a place about four coss from the Tukhti Soliman, began the sport; but the orders of Shah Tahmasp were, that no person but himself and the king should discharge an arrow without express permission. After a short time, a deer came bounding towards his majesty; when the Persian monarch called out, "now Humayun, let us see how you shoot." On which his Majesty discharged his arrow, which struck the animal behind the ear, and it fell struggling on the ground; at which all the Persians were astonished..........[346]

This is when Humayun was also tested for his horsemanship by making him to mount an unbroken horse.[347] At most of these hunting expeditions, Shah's womenfolk also accompanied. If the two 'sovereign' were exhibiting their superiority over each other, so do were their women. Gulbadan Begam mentions that on one occasion Shah had arranged *chatr* and *taqs*, which provided an opportunity to Shahzada Sultanam (Shah's sister) and Hamida Banu to boast of their sovereign's superior privileges. Gulbadan writes:

> That day Shahzada Sultanam asked Hamida Banu Begam: 'Are such *chatr* and *Taq* met with in Hindustan?" The begam answered: 'They say two *dang* with respect to Khorasan, and

[346] Aftabchi, *The Tezkereh al Vakiat or Private Memoirs of the Moghul Emperor Humayun*, p.67; Sukumar Ray, *Humayun in Persia*, p.30.
[347] Aftabchi, *The Tezkereh al Vakiat or Private Memoirs of the Moghul Emperor Humayun*, p.64.

> four *dang* with respect to Hindustan. When a thing is found in two *dang*, it is clear it will be found better in four.[348]

However, the most glaring example that provides a clue that these two sovereigns wanted to exhibit their superiority over other is again provided by Humayun. Finding Humayun as a wanderer, driven out from his own dominion, it was a good opportunity for Shah Tahmasp to seek answer or justification for any old event. It is alleged that Humayun after the victory of Gujarat, through his method of divine arrows, a method used to predict future, placed Shah Tahmasp on the second class of twelve arrows, while his own name on first class of twelve arrows. This provided a ground to Shah Tahmasp to seek justification for this particular act of Humayun, which at least symbolically lowered the position of a Persian Shah in comparison to Mughal 'sovereign'. Replying to the query from Shah, Humayun replied:

> The fact is, that I then looked to the extent of our mutual dominions; and as Persia at that time was only of half the extent of the kingdom of Hindustan, I therefore considered you as inferior to myself. Tahmasp then said, in an ill natured manner, "it was a consequence of your foolish vanity, that you could not properly govern those extensive dominions; you

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[348] Begum, *Humayunnama*, pp.170-171.

were therefore driven away by the villagers, and left your wife and family captives.[349]

Well, then taken from above, the Shia-Sunni factor also contributed in the apathy between Persia and Hindustan, and despite all the respect shown towards Humayun, remained an important element that soured the relationship between the two, even if Abul Fazl is believed, for a short time.[350]

However, Jouhar Aftabchi has taken pains of going into much greater details about Humayun's 'humiliation' for being a sunni emperor without any dominions, and that too at the mercy of the Shah. According to Jouhar, Humayun and his trusted noble Bairam Khan were humiliated for not wearing a particular cap associated with Shia sect. He went as far as alleging that Shah Tahmasp was actually forcing Humayun to adopt Shia faith and put it as a precondition for the latter's help.[351]

In fact, given the precarious situation in which Humayun entered the Persian territory, and also in anticipation of what lies ahead, a cleverly thought message was given to him by Husain Quli Mirza right at the time of entering Sistan. Husain Quli Mirza met Humayun on his way from Mashhad to Mecca after studying the

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[349] Aftabchi, *The Tezkereh al Vakiat or Private Memoirs of the Moghul Emperor Humayun*, p.69; Sukumar Ray, *Humayun in Persia*, p.28.
[350] Abul Fazl, *Akbarnama*, I, p.439; Sukumar Ray, *Humayun in Persia*, p.28.
[351] For details, see Aftabchi, *The Tezkereh al Vakiat or Private Memoirs of the Moghul Emperor Humayun*, pp.62-66; For a critical examination, see Masoom Raza Qazim, "Humayun in Iran," *Islamic Culture*, 53; and Sharma, *Mughal Empire in India*, pp.54-55.

Shia and Sunni Faith. He initially told Humayun that in Persia any one who condemns the first three Caliphs is praised, and then warned him that for little praise no Sunni would deviate from his faith.[352]

Humayun under the circumstances in which he was placed could not have afforded to have infuriated the zealous Shia Shah of Persia. His father Babar earlier is alleged to have professed Shia faith for the help of Persians. Humayun, thus, showed his respect to the beliefs of Shia and visited the shrines of Shia Imams. However, Shah's mind apparently was poisoned against Humayun by some his own men and some of Humayun's, like Rushan Kuka, who was displeased with Humyun on being caught with stolen jewels from Hamida Banu.[353] Had it not been for the generous help and support of Shah's sister, Humayun might have ended up in more troubles. It was she, who on the plea of having a friend in Humayun rather then adding the list of his foes convinced Shah to extend his support to Humayun.[354]

The help *(kumak)* of Shah to Humayun was not unconditional. If Jouhar is to be believed, three conditions were put before Humayun, the content of which is nowhere mentioned. However, some speculations could be made. It must have been a condition to promote Shia faith in Hindustan, if not to adopt it, and secondly, Qandhar be given to the Persians. It was only after acceding to the

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[352] For full story, see Dughlat, *Tarikh-i Rashidi*, p.740.
[353] See Begum, *Humayunnama*, pp.171-174; Aftabchi, *The Tezkereh al Vakiat or Private Memoirs of the Moghul Emperor Humayun*, p.68 and 72.
[354] Aftabchi, *The Tezkereh al Vakiat or Private Memoirs of the Moghul Emperor Humayun*, p.64.

above conditions, a troop of 12000, which in actual turned out 14000 was sent with Humayun to re-conquer his lost territories and status.[355] In the words of Gulbadan Begum:

> At length the Shah dispatched his own son and Khan's and Sultans and amirs with his majesty to help him, together with good arms and tents, folding and audience tents; and chart and taq and shamiana, excellently wrought, and all sorts of the things necessary and fit for a king, from the mattress-warehouse and the treasury and the workshops and kitchen and buttery. In a propitious hour those two mighty sovereigns bade one another farewell and his Majesty left that country for Qandahar.[356]

4.5 Re-conquest of Hindustan and 'Sovereignty'

Humayun's fortune started to favour him once the Persian Shah accorded him high respect in his dominions. Khwaja Jalauddin Obhi, a noble of Mirza Askari deserted his master and joined Humayun earlier.[357] The fort of Bust, which was under the officers of Mirza Askari, was ordered to be conquered, and from there Humayun proceeded towards Qandhar. There is every reason to believe, as asserted by Gulbadan that on getting the news of the approaching Humayun, Mirza Askari sent young Akbar to Mirza Kamran, who hurriedly tried *harem* insinuation for stopping

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[355] Aftabchi, *The Tezkereh al Vakiat or Private Memoirs of the Moghul Emperor Humayun*, p.77.
[356] Begum, *Humayunnama*, p.174.
[357] Dughlat, *Tarikh-i Rashidi*, p.739.

Humayun by sending Khanzada Begam, sister of Babur.[358] In 1545, Qandhar was conquered from Mirza Askari and as promised was handed over to the Persians. Fortunately for Humayun, the young prince under whose command Qandhar was given died even before Humayun had reached Kabul and thus provided an opportunity to him to take it back. Accordingly, Qandhar was taken back or rather conquered back, and after nearly five years, Humayun was again seen practicing his royal prerogatives, as he divided Qandhar among his officers.[359] Freed from the Persian obligation and tasting victory after a long time, it appears that Humayun this time was adamant and cautious, as well as, practical in exercising the powers of a *Padishah.* When several chiefs pleaded clemency for Mirza Kamran, Humayun showed sternness and did not acceed away to their demands immediately.[360]

Witnessing a resolution in Humayun, many of the noted *amirs* started to desert the camps of Mirza Kamran. Among them were Yadgar Nasir Mirza, Mirza Hindal and Babus Beg also joined Humayun.[361] Realizing little success, Kamran fled to Hindustan, and thus, Humayur re-conquered Kabul in 1545. For next, full ten years Kabul was changing hands between Humayun and Kamran until 1555 when the Afghans were defeated in the battle of Sirhind.

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[358] Begum, *Humayunnama*, p.175; Aftabchi, *The Tezkereh al Vakiat or Private Memoirs of the Moghul Emperor Humayun*, p.78.
[359] Aftabchi, *The Tezkereh al Vakiat or Private Memoirs of the Moghul Emperor Humayun*, p.80.
[360] Ibid., p.81.
[361] Begum, *Humayunnama*, p. 177.

These ten years were very important in marking the slow progress towards the evolution of a political structure. No doubt, Kamran took Kabul more than once after it was won by Humayun, but the manner in which he handled his officers, and the manner in which he conducted himself clearly indicated that he was no longer prepared to lower the prestige of the crown. Possibly the experience gained in Persia in this regard played a role.

Thus, the distribution of Kabul and its dependencies as assignments among his officers was a first major step taken by Humayun.[362] All the officers who deserted Kamran to join Humayun were adequately promoted. Efforts were also made to gain some allies by writing to Mirza Sulaiman of Badakshan, who was punished, in the absence of Humayun for being his ally by Kamran.[363] Suspecting contravention of his desire to see him, Humayun marched out against Badakshan and won it in 1546.[364] This was a hardly done before 1540, when he failed to take action and act strongly when even his decrees were not obeyed.

Again we find Humayun acting shrewdly, when he had to make peace with Mirza Sulaiman after Kamran took Kabul and most of his officers had deserted him. In the peace settlement with Mirza Sulaiman, Humayun like a clever statesman retained Qundez and assigned it to Hindal.[365] However, after reconquering Kabul,

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[362] Aftabchi, *The Tezkereh al Vakiat or Private Memoirs of the Moghul Emperor Humayun*, p.83.
[363] Ibid., p.83.
[364] Begum, *Humayunnama*, p. 180; Aftabchi, *The Tezkereh al Vakiat or Private Memoirs of the Moghul Emperor Humayun*, p.84.
[365] Aftabchi, *The Tezkereh al Vakiat or Private Memoirs of the Moghul Emperor Humayun*, p.85.

Humayun punished its people for allowing Kamran to capture it by allowing his soldiers to plunder it for whole night.[366]

However, when Mirza Kamran showed signs of repentance not only he was taken well, but Mirza Askari was also released. All the four brothers, Humayun, Kamran, Askari and Hindal sat on the same carpet and took the meal together. According to Jouhar perhaps to prevent further troubles, Humayun divided the territories among his three brothers. Jouhar writes:

> On the following day the King marched from Talican, with his three brothers, to the mountains of *Asheq Masheq*, where they remained for a week; during which time the King made a division of the country between them and the other chiefs. The districts of Kulab he assigned to the princes Kamran and Askery, burthened with a pension to Chakar Beg, one of the generals of Kamran. The forts of Talican and Zuffer, with their dependencies were given to Mirza Sulaiman and that of Candahar to the prince Hindal.[367]

According to Gulbadan Began, it was during this time that some regulations (*tura*) were also enjoined by Humayun for interviews with King.[368]

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[366] Ibid, p.87.
[367] Aftabchi, *The Tezkereh al Vakiat or Private Memoirs of the Moghul Emperor Humayun*, pp.92-93.
[368] Begum, *Humayunaama*, p. 187.

He also devised plans of extending his dominions by marching out against Uzbegs in Balkh. On his request, Mirza Sulaiman and Askari joined his forces but Kamran failed to turn up.[369] Despite the disaster at Balkh, Humayun unfailingly strove hard and fought like a *Padishah* and more importantly inspired confidence in his troops. But when Kamran was nabbed at Ghakkar, this time he showed no brotherly affection and blinded Kamran. Our sources, especially Gulbadan writes that Humayun was reluctant to take a strong action, but was convinced hard by his nobles to take action. Gulbadan Begum recalls:

> To be brief, all the assembled Khan's and Sultans, and high and low, and plebian and noble, and soldiers and the rest who all bore the mark of Mirza Kamran's hand, with one voice represented to his Majesty: Brotherly custom has nothing to do with ruling and reigning. If you wish to act as a brother, abandon the throne. If you wish to be King, put aside brotherly sentiment.[370]

Probably owing to this resolution of his officers, who stood by him in difficult times, Humayun before the march for Hindustan gave orders for the blinding of Kamran.

To conclude, it is evident from the two sections of the above chapter that Humayun after initially trying to give practical shapes to the concept of *'Padishah'* and in an

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[369] Ibid., p.191.
[370] Begum, *Humayunnama*, pp.200-201.

effort to evolve a political structure suffered humiliating defeat from the Afghans. His softness to take stern action against his own brother, especially against Mirza Kamran added to his miseries and ultimately forced him to seek shelter in Persia and suffer humiliation from the Persian King. The time he spent with Shah Tahmasp in Persia, however appeared to have shown the working of a 'sovereign' and his sternness in his decisions and in his ability to turn his desires into decrees. Thus, although with the help of the Persian army Humayun was able to conquer Qandhar, but afterwards started to act independently and strongly. Instead of mere wish lists, practical promotions were made. Humayun was the first of the Turks to emphasize that the 'King was the shadow of God on the earth'. Khwandmir calls him a personification of the spiritual and temporal sovereignty (*Jamai Sultanati Haqiqi wa Majazi*), and His Majesty the King, the Shadow of God (*Hazrat-i Padshah Zill-i-Ilahi*). Abul Fazl used the word '*Insan-i Kamil'*, or the perfect men for him who use to receive institutions and inspiration from God.[371]

The division of territories as assignments, the treatise with different rulers, and more importantly his firmness started to at least guide the 'Mughal concept of sovereignty' and shaped its political structure as well. It shall be discussed in the next chapter which was heavily influenced by Persians.

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[371] Abul Fazl, *Akbarnama,* I, p.120 and 115.

CHAPTER-FIVE

Towards Centralisation: Akbar and the Evolution of Mughal Polity (1556-1575)

The Mughal Empire entered into a new phase of crisis in 1556, after the accidental death of its Emperor Humayun, who in the previous year had just managed to re-conquer Delhi, which was lost from Mughal control due to the haughty nobility as has already been discussed in the previous chapter. The Mughal throne at this time was far from secure, with numerous internal and external enemies waiting for an opportunity to attack.[372] Akbar, the son of Humayun, was just fourteen years old, and, the absence of a fixed law of succession meant that his uncles could have weighed in with their claims to the throne.[373] The Mughal nobility inherited by Akbar from his father and grandfather was mainly *Turani* (that is Turks, but applied to all central Asia). Although the racial composition of the nobility, by the time of Humayun, included some Persians as well, the nobility as such was dominated by the *Turanis*. The *Turanis* were known for their fickleness and *Fitna* (a Persio/Arabic word used for describing sedition, rebellion, dissention, anarchy

[372] Soon after Humayun's death Hemu, the Prime minister of Adil Shah occupied Delhi and Agra. The regions of Punjab were contested by Sikandar Shah Sur. Mirza Muhammad Hakim virtually became independent from Delhi. Moreover the territories in the neighbourhood of Delhi and Agra fell in the grip of severe famine and plague. For a detailed study of the difficulties endured after Humayun's death, see R. P. Tripathi, *Rise and Fall of the Mughal Empire* (Allahabad, Central Book Depot 1977).

[373] Akbar was born at Amarkot in A. D. 1542 while his father was on exile. Thus at the time of Humayun's death he was hardly fourteen years old

and likewise).[374] However, it was Bairam Khan, a Persian noble and *ataligh* (tutor/guardian) of Akbar, perhaps with the concurrence of senior nobles, who proclaimed Akbar as the Emperor of Mughal dominions in South Asia.[375]

It has been argued by I.A. Khan, that Timurid rulers, whom the Mughals succeeded never ruled as absolute sovereign.[376] Their hands were tied by the laws of Chinggis Khan, called as '*yasa*'. These laws granted hereditary privileges to the nobility. According to I.A Khan, the early Mughals were fervently keen to follow these laws. In this context, the power of the nobility in the late 1550 is understandable as discussed previously. The Timurid's gave precedence to *yasa* over anything under the sun, so much so that even Muslim law (shariat) had a limited role to play.[377] But Muslim law was there, and therefore, be it due to *yasa* or owing to *shariat* it is quite apparent that there were certain inherent elements in Mughal system which rendered the power of the 'sovereign' weak. In this debate, under the strong influence of Aligarh school of thought, all explanations share the tendency to explain both Mughal sovereignty, and status of the nobles, in

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[374] For the racial composition of the Mughal nobility in 1555 see Iqtidar Alam Khan, "The Nobility of Akbar and Development of his Religious Policy, 1560-1580," *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society* 1 (1968).The word 'fitna' in terms of political theory has been best deployed by Andre Wink. See, Andre Wink, *Al-Hind: The Making of the Indo-Islamic World* (Leider : E. J. Brill 1990).

[375] For Bairam Khan, see the relevant chapters in S. K. Banerjee, *Humayun Badshah* (Calcutta,Oxford University Press 1983). Tripathi, *Rise and Fall of the Mughal Empire*. Iqtidar Alam Khan, "The Mughal Court Politics During Bairam Khan's Regency," *Medieval India-A Miscellany* 1 (1969).

[376] According to the *'Yasa-i Chinggisi'*, the *'Khaqan'* (Leader) was always elected by an assembly called *'qurultai'*. He could not be nominated. Also, all those claiming ancestry from the tribe and family of Chinggis Khan, had hereditary privileges. See Iqtidar Alam Khan, "The Turko Mogol Theory of Kingship," *Medieval India - a Miscellany* II (1972).

[377] See Sanjay Subrahmanyam Muzaffar Alam, ed., *The Mughal State 1526-1750* (Delhi, 1998). p. 22.

teleological terms. As a result, certain other important elements and finer nuances of Mughal polity as inherited and as subsequently developed by Akbar have been overlooked.[378] The upshot of the present dissertations analysis of the Mughal court politics in Akbar's early years is a re-appraisal of a linear model of the development of Turko-Mongol kingship.

The nature of the sources through which the history of the Mughal Empire in general and that of Emperor Akbar in particular is documented offers a serious problem.[379] Just like any source of any other medieval society, the scope of the Mughal court chronicles, written in Persian, is very limited. They were profoundly elite focussed and the narration was limited either to the court and the nobility (conquests, administrative measures etc.) or to the men of the religion (spread of particular religion, rise of sects etc.). The primary objective of the writer was to praise the patron using flattery as the tool of expression and exaggerating the account. With the hyperbole language and excessive flattery, as was the case with Abul Fazl, the mentor and historian of Akbar, much of the crucial facts remain difficult to discern. In this context it appears that the Mughal historian were simply following a precedent set by a fourteenth century historian of the Delhi Sultanat, Ziauddin Barani who wrote that history is the special preserve of the nobles and the distinguished, the great men and the sons of great men. This outlook

[378] Ibid
[379] The literary sources for Mughal history abounds in number. They comprise of standard works on history, biographies and chronicles, travelogues and foreigner's accounts and a huge mass of general literature of incalculable historical value. Apart from the travelogues most of the sources were written in Persian.

naturally looked at the court only and the inferences drawn on the basis of such account could not represent all the classes in the Mughal society thereby providing us only with a partial picture.

Although, the historians in their work have promised to be 'objective' in their narration, one cannot overrule their own prejudices, which comes into play in their description of the fact. For instance, Abdul Qadir Badaoni *(Muntakhab-ut Tawarikh and Najat al-Rashid)* had a special grudge against Emperor Akbar whereas the official historian Abul Fazl (*Akbarnama and Ain-i Akbari)* owing to his closeness with the emperor had provided a highly exaggerated account.[380] Similarly, the account left by the Christian missionaries who induced by the emperor's keenness in Christianity, were eager to convert him to Christianity, have left a highly subjective account[381]. Thus, most of the information is not only highly 'contaminated' but also intensely 'selective'.

The problem becomes more acute when the contemporaries are dealing with the nobility and their role and behaviour towards a particular emperor, especially when dealing with their own relatives. Though the memoirs of Babur are often

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[380] Both, Badaoni and Abul Fazl were the disciple of Shaikh Mubarak, father of Abul Fazl who were accused of innovations in Islam and had to lead a life of wanderers before Emperor Akbar admitted them into court. They thus had animosity towards fanatical Islam and the Muslim Clerics. This attitude blended completely with the emperor's mind and Abul fazl's subsequent rise in the nobility is attributed to his religious ideas. Badaoni, on the other hand was a bigoted Muslim and did not approve of emperor's attitude towards Islam. He attributed his low profile in the nobility due to his religious outlook and criticizes both Akbar and Abul Fazl. See Abul Fazl Allami, *Akbarnama*, tr. Henry Beveridge, New Delhi: Saeed International, 1989, 3 vols. Abdul Qadir Badaoni, *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh*, tr. W. H. Lowe, Karachi: Karimsons, 1976, 2 vols.

[381] See J.S.Hoyland translated and S.N.Banerjee annotated, *The commentary of Father Monserrate,* New Delhi: Asian Educational services, 1992.

compared with the "Confessions of St. Augustine" he, too, could not help his biases from finding a place in his narration.[382] The two autobiographical dictionaries, *Tazkirat al-Umara* and *Dhakhirat ul-Khavanin* have been particularly helpful in an attempt to know about the nobility and their profile. These works describe the lives of some of the prominent nobles. Both biographical dictionaries tremendously help in analysing Mughal politics of these particular times. This chapter, besides showing the importance of the connective links between South Asia and Central Asia, argues that the various reforms initiated by Akbar were a direct result of a crisis in the social and political space given to the principle of 'blood', and also interestingly to the principle of 'milk' in Mughal society. The crisis could be traced back to Central Asia.

Thus, this chapter explores the interplay between different nobility groups in the Mughal body politics against the backdrop of Emperor Akbar's (r.1556-1605) various innovative administrative reforms. This chapter also contributes to the on-

[382] Writing about Khadija Begam, the wife of Sultan Husain Mirza, Babar moans that she was very dominant who caused Sultan Husain Mirza's sons to rebel against him and calls her as of "silly character". Similarly about the first wife of Sultan Husain Mirza, Babur writes, "The first wife of Sultan Husain Mirza was Bega Sultan begam and about her Babar writes, " She was very cross-tempered and made the Mirza endure much wretchedness, un till driven at last to despair, he let himself free by divorcing her. What was he to do? Right was with him. A bad wife in a good man's house, make this world his hell. God preserve every Musalman from this misfortune! Would that not a single cross or ill tempered wife were left in the world!" See *Baburnama*, tr. From the original Turki text by Annette Susannah Beveridge, London: Luzac and Co; 1922,1, p.301.

going discussion on Akbar, and takes the scholarship beyond the simplistic explanation that the emperor's spectacular reign was a result of his genius.[383]

5.1. Clash of 'Blood' versus 'Milk': Nobility and the Weakening of Central Authority (A. D. 1556-1560)

It has already been highlighted in the previous chapter that the principle of 'blood' posed serious problems to the authority of Mughal emperors from 1526-1556. All those who could claim blood relation with the ruling house of Babar or even the same descent from Timur or Chinggis Khan, defied the authority of Mughal emperors. This predicament is well documented in the recent modern works, which explains and trace this phenomenon back to Central Asia. The argument is well understandable in this context. However, a minute analysis of the source material during the early period of Akbar's reign reveals the equal dominance of a group of nobles who did not have any blood connection with the Mughal ruling house. This group comprised of foster parents of Akbar were popularly known as *atka khail.* The interest of this group were in conflict with the group of nobility who claimed same blood relationship with the emperor and much of the conflict

[383] For a recent scholarship on Akbar see Munis D. Faruqui, "The Forgotton Prince: Mirza Hakim and the Formation of the Mughal Empire in India," *Journal of Economic and Social History of the Orient* 48 (2005), Ruby Lal, *Domesticity and power in the early Mughal world*, Cambridge:Cambridge University Press 2005; Rosalind O'Hanlon, "Manliness and Imperial Service in Mughal North India," *Journal of Economic and Social History of the Orient* 42 (1999).; John F. Richards, ed., *Kingship and Authority in South Asia* (South Asian studies, 1978).

between 1556-1560 and to some extent up till 1568 that weakened the position of Akbar as a 'sovereign' could be attempted to explain from this perspective.

Thus a closer and fresh examination of Mughal sources, during the early years of Akbar reign (both contemporary and near contemporary accounts), reveals the existence of two groups exerting direct or indirect influence to undermine the status of the 'sovereign'.

These groups were (a) wet-nurses and their relatives, also known as the 'foster battalion (*atka khail*) and (b) blood relatives or *Turani* nobles.

It appears from the account of both Abul Fazl and Badauni that during the regency of Bairam Khan (A.D. 1556–1560), there was continuous conflict for political ascendancy between the 'aristocracy of blood' and the 'aristocracy of milk.'[384] Mughal reverence for Mongol customs, gave the hereditary *(Turani)* nobility privileged status.[385] However in juxtaposition, was the immense importance attached to the *anga* (wet-nurse) in the Muslim tradition. Children, sharing the same wet-nurse were regarded as 'milk-siblings.' These bonds of association conferred an overweening and politically dangerous sense of entitlement to the Emperor's 'milk relatives'.

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[384] I have referred 'aristocracy of blood' to those nobles who claimed of the same lineage as that of the ruling house. Broadly speaking, the term can be applied to *'Turani'* nobility for which I. A. Khan, has written extensively.

[385] See Khan, "The Nobility of Akbar and Development of his Religious Policy, 1560-1580."

Akbar had quite a few wet-nurses. *Abul Fazl* lists at least nine of them — baring one. The absence of the name of Maham Anga is conspicuous, as it was she who, more than any other, who carried the banner for the 'aristocracy of milk'.[386] Her name appears for the first time in the chronicle *Akbarnama*, after the accession of Akbar, when he recalled his *zanana (haram-i muqaddas)* from Kabul and sent Maham Anga to receive them. Abul Fazl then writes about her as extremely loyal and much respected by Akbar.[387]

At the time of the accession of Akbar, in 1556's at least three wet-nurses were in a position to maintain links with the court, through their masculine relatives. They were (1) Maham Anga with her son Adham Khan (2) Jiji Anga with her husband Shamsuddin Atka and (3) the anonymous mother of Zain Khan Kukah. The situation at the time of the accession of Akbar was full of opportunity for various groups, who could influence the young emperor, for the monarch too, was under the vice-regency of Bairam Khan.

It appears that there was intense competition amongst Akbar's wet-nurses. Each wanted to become the favourite foster mother. Of course, Maham Anga was a mistress of tactful ambition, who from the beginning, had plans to be the favourite

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[386] They were Jiji Anga, Daya Bhawal, Fakhr-i-Nisa, Bhawal Anga, the wife of Khwaja Ghazi, Koki Anga, Bibi Rupa, Khaldar Anga and lastly Pija Jan Anga. It is interesting to note that the name of Maham Anga does not appear in the list. This may be due to Maham Anga being a title and not a proper name. For full discussion see Abul Fazl, *Akbarnamah*, ed. Maulavi Abdur Rahim, Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1878-1887,1, pp. 134.
[387] Ibid., 2, p. 55.

foster mother of the emperor. She complained to Humayun, that Jiji Anga, another foster mother of Akbar, was practicing incantations, so that the child Akbar should not accept anyone's milk but her own.[388] At the accession of Akbar, *Maham Anga* seemed to have enjoyed a considerable sway over the heart and mind of the young Emperor. Abu'l Fazl writes about her as having "abundant sense and loyalty, held a high place in the esteem of *Shahinshah* and who had been in his service from the time of cradle till his adornment of the throne and who had trod the path of good service with the acme of affection."[389]

In the second reignal year, Akbar a young boy of 16 years was married to the daughter of Abdullah Khan Mughal. It appears that here Maham Anga seemed to have played an important part since Akbar did not have any power to form or enter into any sort of matrimonial alliances. Bairam Khan, the *Vakil* of the Empire resented this marriage because one of the daughters of Abdullah Khan was already married to Mirza Kamran, who had posed so many problems for the ruling emperors. Bairam Khan regarded Abdullah Khan as partisan of Kamran but his resentment seems to have little impact on the decision.[390]

At this stage Bairam Khan must have realised the importance of Maham Anga and of the dangers she might pose to his position. In order to strengthen his position Bairam Khan married Salima Sultan Begum, daughter of Humayun's sister and

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[388] Ibid., 1, p.187.
[389] *Akbarnama*, 2, p.86.
[390] *Akbarnama*, 2, p.88.

Akbar's cousin. This marriage must have enhanced the prestige of Bairam Khan among the Mughal nobles as a kinsman of the ruling house. However, Bairam Khan's suspicion against Maham Anga did not disappear. He in fact grew more vigilant and always saw the moves of Maham Anga suspiciously. This is evident from the fact that during the siege of Mankot Bairam Khan fell ill and was confined to his tents. At this time Akbar enjoyed himself with elephants fight when accidentally two elephants came near to Bairam Khan's tent. The crowd of people and the general uproar caused apprehensions and annoyance to Bairam Khan and came to suspect some conspiracy against him. He sent a message to Maham Anga saying, "I am not conscious of having committed any offence in this sphere circled threshold and I have not displayed anything except well wishing respect. Why then mischief makers imputed some offence to me and caused such unkindness as that furious elephants should have been let lose against my tent."[391]

Bairam Khan in fact did act in highhandedness but his contribution in securing the throne for Akbar was more than that. This growing power of Bairam Khan led a conspiracy against him, led by Maham Anga which ultimately forced Akbar to take the reign of Government in his hands. Akbar dismissed Bairam Khan from the office of *Vakalat* and appointed Shihabuddin Ahmad Khan as the new *Vakil* on the advice of Maham Anga. Bairam Khan suspected the role of Maham Anga in his dismissal beforehand and he accepted Akbar's offer of going on a pilgrimage to Mecca, when he wrote to the officers on the borders saying that he wants to take

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[391] *Akbarnama,* 2, pp.91-92.

revenge against those who had perverted the mind of Akbar and had made him a vagabond, especially "Maham Anga, who was a great authority (and who) had wrought this, and was making it her business to ruin him."[392] Bairam Khan was ultimately defeated and murdered in by an Afghan of Patan in Gujarat in 1560.[393]

After the death of Bairam Khan, it appears that the scuffle between the 'aristocracy of blood and the aristocracy of milk' became more intense, given the vested position to the person of emperor of both the groups.[394] Each group appears to be frantic to get the highest position in the nobility and to exert as much influence on the state policies as possible. Maham Anga exploited the situation towards her

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[392] *Akbarnama,* 2, p.159.

[393]The name of the widow of Bairam Khan was Salima Begam.

Historians have argued as to the causes for the dismissal of Bairam Khan. According to V.A.Smith, *Akbar, The Great Mogul,* Oxford; Clarendon Press, 1917, the dismissal of Bairam Khan was due to the sunni reaction against the pro-shia policies of Bairam Khan. R.P Tripathi, *Rise and Fall of the Mughal Empire,* is of the view that Akbar by 1560 was coming up of age. He, by this time was eighteen years old and did not have any Privy Purse and so wanted to have to government in his hands.

[394] The Central Asian nobles, owing to the customs of Chinggis Khan claimed hereditary privileges where as the foster relatives had milk privileges. Both these groups acted in high handedness undermining the position of the Emperor. The *Turani* nobles have been the most untrustworthy nobles. All the revolts chronicled by Babar as made against himself were under the Mughal leadership. Babar writes that "up to now they (Mughals) have rebelled five times against me. It must not be understood that they rebelled through not getting on with me; they have done the same thing with their own Khan's again and again". See *Babarnama,* 1, p.105. The Foster Battalion had also taken Emperor for granted as is evident from the above. Regarding one of his foster brother, Mirza Aziz Koka, Akbar used to say that 'a channel of milk connects me and Mirza Aziz Koka'. Moreover, they all had their *Jagirs* (revenue assignments) at one place where they had developed local roots, sometimes showing an attitude of defiance. In his thirteenth reignal year (1568-1569) Akbar removed the Atka Khail rrom the Panjab and took great credit to himself for this step, and said that he had scattered the Atka Khail so that they had become like the stars of the constellation. Abul Fazl (*Akbarnama,* 2, pp.486-487) giving the reason for their removal writes that "As gardeners adorn gardens with trees and move from one place to another, and reject many, and irrigate others, and labour to rear them to proper size, and expatriate bad trees, and lop off evil branches, and remove trees that are too large and graft some upon others, and gather their various fruits and flowers, and enjoy their shade when necessary, and do other things which are necessary in the science of horticulture, so do just and far-seeing Kings light the lamp of wisdom by regulating and instructing their wisdom, and so uproar the standard of guidance............Whenever a large body is gathered together of one mind and speech, and show much push and energy, it is proper to disperse them, firstly for their own good and secondly for the welfare of the community".

needs much to the fiasco of the *'Turani'* (Central Asian) nobility. Abul Fazl writes that "Maham Anga in her great loyalty and wisdom took charge of affairs and made Shihabuddin Ahmad Khan and Khwaja Jahan her tools and exerted herself to soothe those who came."[395] Soon afterwards she devised the appointing of Bahadur Khan to the office of *Vakalat,* who caused dissension in the nobility.[396] Abul Fazl mentions that "in those days, though Bahadur Khan had the name of *Vakil,* yet in reality the business was transacted by Maham Anga."[397] In 1561, Akbar appointed Shamsuddin Muhammad Atka as the new *Vakil* which was resented by Maham Anga who regarded herself as the substantive *Vakil.* It appears for the first time that Akbar wanted to free himself from this politics and there were reasons for that. Once Akbar had a pressing desire for Rupees eighteen, which the then *Diwan* could not supply and ultimately Maham Anga gave to Akbar the said amount. It must have been a pity for the emperor who did not have any privy purse. Moreover, Adham Khan, son of Maham Anga was also acting in an arbitrary fashion. Abul Fazl mentions Adham Khan in the following words, "folly and blindness of heart were the confirmed qualities of Adham Khan." As the commander of the royal army who captured the province of Malwa, Adham Khan did not send two beauties from the *harem* of its ruler Baz Bahadur to Akbar. "He

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[395] *Akbarnama,* 2, p.149. V.A.Smith has referred the period after the death of Bairam Khan, and the rise in power of Maham Anga as the period of **Petticoat government.** This period saw a steep rise in the power of Maham Anga. Though V.A.Smith included in his petticoat government the name of Mariam Makami, the mother of Akbar as well but her role was not prominent. See, *Akbar, the great Mogul.*

[396] Within six months of Bairam Khan's fall, Akbar appointed, in quick succession, as many as four persons to the exalted office of the Prime-Minister. It appears that Akbar did not permit them to adopt an independent course of action. By appointing Bahadur Khan as the Prime-Minister it also seems that Akbar was degrading the exalted office because of the tussle in his nobility for the post.

[397] *Akbarnama,* 2, p.151.

intrigued with his mother's servant who waited in the royal harem, and spirited away from the *Shahinshah's* enclosure, two special beauties from among Baz Bahadur's women and who had been recently exhibited to His Majesty. Able men undertook the service, and by making proper search they caught both of them and brought them back. Maham Anga perceived that if these two women were introduced to His Majesty the veil over her acts would be raised and her son's treachery be revealed. She therefore caused these two innocent ones to be put to death for 'a severed head makes no sound."[398]

It also appears from Abul Fazl's account that Adham Khan in fact did try to murder Akbar. He writes, "His Majesty slept that night on the roof of Adham Khan's house. That evil inauspicious wretch was lying in ambush and was waiting for his opportunity, as perhaps the glance of the holy one might fall on his *Harem* and so the villain might make this a pretext and slay him. Adham Khan's ill omen *harem* house was a thing of which that wise and chaste one never thought. As the Divine protection ever watches over that spiritual and material cynosure, that black hearted and ill fated one had no power or pretext (for injuring him) and the a vaunt of real and spiritual sovereignty protected him in his loneliness."[399] Adham Khan's highhandedness reached to a point where he murdered the *Vakil* Shamsuddin Muhammad Khan Atka, the foster father of Akbar and with a naked dagger in his hands entered the apartments where Akbar was sleeping. Niamat Khan, the

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[398] *Akbarnama*, 2, p.221.
[399] Ibid.

eunuch acting loyally closed the doors and Akbar then capitally punished Adham Khan. Soon, Maham Anga also died.

However, the problems posed by this 'aristocracy of milk' continued. The family of Shamsuddîn Atka Khan persisted to act with the presumption of amnesty.[400] Mirza Aziz Kuka, the son of Shamsuddin Atka Khan, who was slightly younger then Akbar, assumed the role of the leader of the foster battalion. Partly due to convention, and partly due to the absence of any competition from other foster relative, Mirza Aziz Kuka assumed great powers. Akbar was often offended by his boldness although he could hardly punish him, owing to Kuka's stature and support within the zanânâ.[401] Regarding him, Akbar used to say, "Between me and Aziz is a river of milk, which I cannot cross."[402] Akbar had to finally disperse the whole family (*atka khail*) from the region of Punjab.[403]

If Akbar found it difficult to deal with the defiant milk nobility, it was still more challenging for him to tackle the haughty blood nobility, who continued to challenge his authority. It is noteworthy that from 1560-1567 no less than nine nobles revolted against Akbar and not surprisingly they were high grandees of the

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[400] For a general history of the family of Shamsuddin Atka, see Afzal Husain, *The Nobility under Akbar and Jahangir*.

[401] It appears that there was a continuous pressure on Akbar from the zanana to pardon Aziz Kukah. See Fazl, *Akbarnamah*, 3, p. 308.

[402] Abul Fazl, *Ain-i Akbari*, H. Blochmann trans., Calcutta, Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1873, 1, p. 343.

[403] In his thirteenth regnal year (1568-1569) Akbar removed the Atka Khail from Punjab and for having done so, took great credit and said that he had scattered the Atka Khail so that they had become like the stars of the constellation. See Fazl, *Akbarnamah*, 2, pp. 332-333. Also see Abdul Qadir Badauni, *Muntakhab al-Tavarikh*, ed. Munshi Ahmad Ali, Calcutta, 1865, 2, p. 106.

emperor. Out of Abul Fazl's list of thirty *Mansabdârs* of the rank of 5000, ten actually caused Fitnâ to the emperor.[404] These were (1) Bairam Khan (2) Adham Khan (3) Mirza Ibrahim [405] (4) Mirza Muzaffar Hussain, (5) Munim Khan, (6) A'li Quli Khan (7) Abdullah Khan (8) Mirza Sharfuddin (9) Mirza Aziz Kuka, and (10) Asaf Khan. If we exclude from the list the revolts of Bairam Khan, Adham Khan, and Mirza Aziz Kuka whose defecate of Akbar have been noted in a different context above, there still remain seven other nobles. Interestingly, except for the revolt of Asaf Khan, who was a Persian all the other nobles were *Turani.* This fact according to Aligarh School of thought underlines the weak position of 'sovereign' within the Turko-Mongol theory of Kingship. Had it not been for the brilliant research of Iqtidar Alam Khan, we would have documented and analyse these revolts again.[406]

However, what is new in the present research is the establishment of the role of matrimonial alliances in these revolts. It is interesting to note that two out of the seven nobles mentioned above were married to the royal princesses. They were (1) Mirza Muzaffar Hussain married to Shahzadah Khanim, daughter of Akbar (2) Mirza Sharfuddin Hussain married to Bakshi Banu Begum, sister of Akbar.[407] The reference to another daughter of Akbar, Aram Banu Begum could not be established.

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[404] The word *Mansabdar* is derived from Arabic word '*mansib*' meaning office or rank. The Mughals organised their army on this basis it was a revenue-cum-military assignment.

[405] Mirza Ibrahim was never a grandee of the Mughal Empire However Abul Fazl has included his name in observance of the etiquettes.

[406] For details please see I.A Khan

[407] It has been argued that after Akbar prohibited the marriage of Mughal Princesses. See Andrea Butenschön, *The Life of a Mogul Princess: Jahanara Begam, Daughter of Shahjahan,* London : G. Routledge & Sons, ltd, 1931.

Thus by 1567-68 Akbar faced this acute crisis from his nobility. He must have understood and realised the problems to his authority if the powers of these groups of nobles remained unchecked. Thus soon after the ouster of Bairam Khan, we can realise that Akbar was innovating various ways to superimpose his authority by not only checking the growing powers of the nobility but also elevating his position as a 'sovereign'. These steps shall now be considered in detail.

5.2 Curbing the Powers of Nobility

Two years after the dismissal of his regent Bairam Khan, Akbar by marrying the daughter of Raja Bhar Mal, Kachhwas Rajputs of Amber, formalised series of matrimonial alliances with the valiant Rajput community of Hindustan, an event which was unprecedented.[408] Through these matrimonial alliances Akbar managed to recruit in his nobility a powerful and more importantly a loyal group. Besides

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[408] The process of establishing matrimonial alliances with the Hindu Rajputs has been studied as the **'Rajput Policy of Akbar'**. S.R.Sharma, *The Religious Policy of the Mughal Emperors*, Calcutta: Humphry Milford, 1940, argued that Akbar married the Hindu princesses because of his secular and liberal outlook. Iqtidar Alam Khan, 'The Nobility of Akbar and Development of His Religious Policy, 1560-1580' argued that Akbar had to recruit Hindu Rajputs because of the menace of his *Turani* nobles. In an another article, 'The Mughal assignment system during Akbar's early years 1556-1575 in Irfan Habib ed., *Medieval India Researches in the History of India 1200-1750*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992, he is of the view that Akbar's attitude towards Rajputs should be studied in the context of the compromises which was made with the local *Zamindars*, especially the Rajput Kings. A.B.Pandey, *Later Medieval India: A History of the Mughals*, Allahabad, Central Book Depot, 1963, argues that the cooperation of the Rajputs alienated the foreign character of the Mughals. Norman Zeiglar, Some notes on Rajput loyalties during the Mughal Period, in Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam ed., *The Mughal State 1526-1750*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998, p.168-210 argues that the family offering her daughter in marriage was automatically reduced to a subordinate position before the family of a son. Thus, Akbar's position is quite clear in this regard. Irfan Habib, *Agrarian System of Mughal India*, Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1963 have calculated that the regions under the Rajputs yielded maximum land revenue to the Mughal treasury and thus the Akbar's desire to conquer these areas without fighting is very obvious.

Rajputs a number of Persian nobles were also recruited. It has been argued by I.A. Khan, that the recruitment of non-Turani element in the nobility of Akbar was a well calculated political move by Akbar. Through this act, he not only got the support of Rajputs but also countered the problems posed by the *Turani* nobles.

Without challenging the excellent argument based on meticulous research, I shall put forward another plausible explanation for establishing matrimonial alliances with the Hindu Rajputs. This argument stands supportive and is in addition to the study of I.A Khan.

It should be noted here that even prior to the problems posed by Maham Anga, Akbar faced a serious challenge to his authority soon after his accession from another woman. Mirza Humayun, the ruler of Badakshan, on Humayun's death showed sign of rebellion. It is interesting to note that Abu'l Fazl, the official chronicler of Akbar's reign attributed this rebellion to the wife of Mirza Sulaiman called Haram Begam, also known as Khurram Begum. Abul Fazl writes that Mirza Sulaiman made Khurram Begam a ruler over himself and could not conduct any business without her advice. This wife of Mirza was favouring one part of Badakshan over another, which led to a reaction against her.[409] Haram Begam left

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[409] Mirza Kamran, brother of Humayun, wanted to marry Haram Begam, the wife of Mirza Sulaiman, the ruler of Badakshan and in fact had sent a proposal to Haram Begam. Haram Begum who had in her thoughts to capture Kabul called her Husband Mirza Sulaiman and her son Mirza Ibrahim and moaned, "Mirza Kamran must have come to think you are cowards, since he sends me a letter like this. Have I deserved to be written in this way? Send off a letter for me about it and rebuke him. What does such a man deserve who, the son of a mother, yet does such monstrous things, and who fears neither me nor my son?" The Begam's marital character spices this story, since her husband did not dare even to make war without her consent. See Begum, *Humayunnama,* p.193.

Badakshan and came to Kabul and joined Humayun's harem. Abul Fazl writes, "She in her little sense and evil soul had seen the outward state of Kabul and resolved to get possession of it. She represented this to Mirza Sulaiman as an easy undertaking and forced him to invade Kabul"[410] to the much distress of young monarch Akbar. Haram Begum and the province of Kabul again become a source of trouble for Akbar when the former began to play politics differently, now because of her husband Mirza Sulaiman, who wanted to marry the widow of Mirza Kamran but Haram Begam married her to Mirza Ibrahim, her son against the will of the widow. Mirza Ibrahim later had a son called Mirza Shahrukh by the widow of Mirza Kamran. After the death of Mirza Ibrahim, his wife Muhtarim Khanim excited Mirza Shahrukh to rebel against his grandfather Mirza Sulaiman which he did.

Akbar, though still in his teenage was watching all the events carefully. The Mughal Empire at that time was practically run by Bairam Khan, who was the tutor of Akbar and also the *Vakil* (Prime minister). At this time the royal Harem was till in Kabul waiting for the affairs there to settle before making a move towards the imperial capital. The event was so dangerous that it is only after settling the affairs of Mirza Sulaiman that Akbar was able to recall his harem from Kabul to India.

[410] *Akbarnama*, 2, pp.39-41.

At this stage Akbar might have realized about the problems which the women posed by seeking active part in the politics. He had seen that before in the affairs of Kabul and now personally witnessed it in his own court. He might have also realised that the women's interest were self-centred, often to forward their own personal interest and that of their relatives. Though an illiterate, Akbar had a passion for history and he might have learnt from those histories the problems which were faced by his ancestors by giving in the body of women a degree of autonomy. By this time he had also witnessed the position of women among his Majority Hindu subjects.[411] The Hindu women did not have any independent identity.[412] Her identity was dependent on her husband, to whom once married there was no going back. Symbolically, a woman is part of her husband, his half body. Rules for proper conduct mandates that she transfer her powers, as they

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[411] The word *'Hindu'* is a geographical definition which refers to the people living beyond the river *'Sindhu'* (Indus). According to historians, this word *'Hindu'* was first used by the Persians who came to India through the North-Western passes of the Himalayas. The Arabs also used it. According to the *'Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics'* ed. By James Hastings (Vol.6, reference no.699) the word Hindu is not found in any of the Indian literature and scriptures before the advent of the Muslims. In his book, *"Discovery of India"*(London, Meridian, 1956) P.74-75, Jawahar Lal Nehru wrote that the earliest occurrence of the word Hindu can be traced to a *'Tantrk'* in eighth century A.D. and it was used to describe the people. It was never used for describing the followers of a particular religion. Its relationship to religion is of late occurrence. The word *'Hinduism'* is derived from the word *'Hindu'* and the British used it for the first time. According to the *'Encyclopaedia Britanica'* (vol.20, reference no. 581), the word *'Hinduism'* was first used by the British writers in A.D. 1830. Thus, the right word for the religion should be *'Sanatana Dharma'* (Eternal religion) or the *'Vedic Dharma'* (Religion of the Vedas)

[412] The concept of female in Hinduism represents a duality: On one hand she is benevolent and on the other hand she is malevolent. Two facets of femaleness relate to this duality. The female is first of all *"Sakti"* (energy/power), the energising principle of the Universe. The female is also *"Prakriti"* (Nature), the undifferentiated matter of the universe. Uniting these two facets of femaleness, women are both energy/power and nature. The equation women =Power + Nature = Danger, represents the essence of femaleness as it underlies Hindu religious belief and action about women. It is essential for a man to control women's power in order to render that power into benevolent. For an excellent study see Susan Wadley, 'Women and the Hindu Tradition' in Rehana Ghadially ed., *Women in Indian Society: A Reader*, New Delhi: Sage Publication, 1988, pp.23-43.

accumulate, to her husband for his use.[413] A central theme of the norms and guidelines for proper female behaviour, especially in the male dominated classical literature, is that men must control women and their power. Even otherwise, whether from folklore, traditions or mythology, the role model for women has always been submissive and subservient to her Husband.[414] Unlike the Muslims, Sita, the obedient wife of Rama and the heroin of the epic 'Ramayana', who in spite of wandering in the jungles with her Husband and showing an attitude of complete dedication was asked to prove her chastity by the same husband remains the role model for many Hindu women even today.[415] If a husband dies the wife had to burn herself alive on the pyre of her husband, a practice known as *Sati*, so that they can be husband and wife in the second life. Father Monserrate had provided a vivid description of the sati practice in the following words, "The wives of the Brahmans, a famous class of nobly-born Hindus, are accustomed, in accordance with an ancient tradition of their religion, to burn themselves on the same pyres as their dead husbands. The wretched women are rendered quite insensible by means

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[413] The dominant norms for the Hindu woman concern her role as a wife. Classical Hindu laws focus almost exclusively on this issue. Role model and norms for mothers, daughters, sisters etc. are less prominent.

[414] The need for women to be obedient and subservient towards her husband has been explicitly mentioned not only in ancient texts but also in the texts of the later period. For a basic guideline see Harikrishna Jayantakrishna Dave ed., *Laws of Manu (Manusmriti)*, Bombay: Bhartiya Vidya Series, 1972. Also see, Wendy Doniger and Sudhir Kakar tr., *Kamasutra*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

[415] See Jacqueline Suthern Hirst, *Sita's Story* (A project of the Dharam Hinduja Institute of Indic research, Faculty of Divinity, University of Cambridge) Hindu Value series 1; series editor Julius Lipner (Surrey, Bayeux Arts incorporated, 1997). Also see Sudhir Kakar, "Feminine Identity in India" in Rehana Ghadially ed., *Women in Indian Society: A Reader*, New Delhi: Sage Publication, 1988. In Islam as well the wife of Prophet Muhammad was accused of adultery. However, the accusation was dealt very differently because from that moment it was decreed that to accuse chaste women is a grave sin. Unlike the Hindu tradition, Aisha (Wife of Prophet) was not asked to prove her chastity. Chapter no. 24, Verse11-23 (An-Nur) of the Holy *Quran* speaks very clearly about this.

of certain drugs, in order that they might feel no pain. For this purpose opium is used........sometimes they are half drugged; and before they lose their resolution, are hurried to the pyre with warnings, prayers and promises of eternal fame. On ariving there they cast themselves into the flames. If they hesitate, the wretched creatures are driven on to the pyre and if they try to leap off again are held down with pales and hooks."[416] The pride and honour of Hindu husband rested on his wife and on the part of the wife there was an attitude of complete submission. In fact Muslim's admiration of *sati* dates back to the time of Amir Khusro and the Mughals too admired their submission and loyalty towards their husband.[417] Akbar must have also realized the issues of sexuality and their use and abuse by the women, which was the inherent weakness in the man. Thus, it appears that Rajput policy of Akbar was to counter check the menace posed by the autonomy of Muslim women and their interference in political affairs of the empire.

The Muslims admiration of loyalty and submission towards the husband among the Hindu women has already been narrated. Not only the wife submitted but also the whole family of a Hindu wife was considered to be of lower status than the family of the groom. In other words, the whole family would become submissive; however, powerful and influential they would be before the groom's family. By this strategy, Akbar counter checked the menace posed by his womenfolk and the

[416] *The commentary of Father Monserrate*, pp.61-62

[417] Amir Khusrau's (d.1235) famous verse: "There is no more manly a lover in the world than the Hindu women. To burn oneself on a burnt-out candle is not what every flying insect can do". Even the theologian Abdul Qadir Badaoni in his *Nijat-ur Rashid*, (A.D.1591) writes in a similar strain, quoting a similar couplet: "in the path of love, how one can be behind a Hindu woman, who burns herself alive over a dead (beloved)". See S. Moinul Haq ed., *Nijat-ur Rashid*, (Lahore, 1972) p.412.

harem and this strategy seems to have worked. There is no reference of any Hindu women in the harem of Akbar taking any part in state politics. Besides, for a fear of acquiring the attitude of Muslim women, Akbar never changed the religion of his Hindu wives and more and more Mughal Princes were married among the Rajputs. The Rajput wives of Akbar practised idol worship inside the royal palace. Akbar got the loyal support of Hindus which made his imperialistic designs much easier, both in terms of conquering the whole of India and also in bringing his nobility under complete subordination. Though, as usual, in portraying his master Akbar as a perfect monarch, Abu'l Fazl says that a law was passed prohibiting the practice of *sati*. However, Father Monserrete writes that Akbar summoned the Christian Fathers to actually witness the sati practice and mentions how Father Rudolph publicly reprimanded the king for his approval of such "revolting crime."[418] It does appear that even if Akbar issued such an order, neither it was implemented nor did it prohibit Akbar's admiration towards *sati*. One of the most powerful noble and who's Sister Akbar married in 1562, Raja Man singh who championed Akbar's cause and followed every rule had 1500 wives and on his death sixty performed sati.[419] That there was an attempt to undermine the position of wife in general and women in particular can be gauged from the number of wives Akbar and his nobility kept. Though there is a mention of only a few of Akbar's wives but one cannot rule out immensely large number of

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[418] *The commentary of Father Monserrate*, pp.61-62

[419] Abul Fazl Allami, "*Ain-i-Akbari*", Transl. H.Blochmann (Calcutta, Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1873) vol.1, p..341 (Hereafter referred as Ain-i-Akbari) and Shaikh Farid Bhakkari, "*The Dhakhirat-ul Khawanin*" tr. Z.A.Desai (Delhi, Idarah-i-Adabiyat, 1999) part 1, p.79. The latter has 60 person's male and female which renders it even more interesting.

concubines and those who even did not had the status of a concubine. In this way the person does not have to go to the same women every night and thus could remain free from any influence.

The over-all impact of Rajput women on the Mughal, *zanana* is summed up by Annette S. Beveridge. She writes-

> Unfortunately the barriers of language and habit must have kept Akbar's Rajput wives from charming the Musalmani ladies by recital of the legends of their race. These Hindus can never have been welcome inmates of the palace to any of the Moslims; but pagan as they were thought, their conduct as wives must have insinuated the thin edge of conviction that no one form of faith is committed the nurture of the sense of duty.[420]

Harbans Mukhia in his recent work *The Mughals of India* concludes that matrimonial alliances between Mughals and Rajputs established the supremacy of the Mughals.[421] Rajput tradition has it that a daughter could only be given in marriage to either the same or the higher caste (*pratiloma*). Thus, through this marriage, the supremacy of the Mughals was established. Using sociological tools, Mukhia in fact provides a new understanding of the Mughal-Rajput matrimonial phenomenon. However, Harbans Mukhia provides the wrong understanding and

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[420] See introduction of Gulbadan Bîgum, "*Humâyûnnâmah,*" ed. Annette S. Beveridge (London, 1902). pp. 68-69

[421] Harbans Mukhia, *Mughals of India* (London,Blackwell 2005)., p.146

definition of the indigenous words *anuloma* and *pratiloma*.[422] *Anuloma* (hypergamy) prescribes marriage of a woman either in the same caste or above, while *Pratiloma* (hypo gamy) is a marriage of a woman to a man below her caste. Through this and other mechanisms caste hierarchies were created in India. The explanation provided by Harbans Mukhia, however is the other way round.[423]

5.3 Reorganising Administration: The Mansabdari System

Despite the matrimonial alliances with Hindu Rajputs and dispersing the foster battalion to different places, Akbar could not have comprehensively subdued the ambitious nobility without reorganising his administration, more specifically the army which was dependent on the *mansab* system, or the assignment of revenues and the conferment of rank. According to Abdul Aziz:

> The *mansab*, although primarily a military rank really constituted the terms in which official hierarchy, and incidentally social status, was expressed. A *mansab* did not by itself imply any particular office. Sometimes the conferment of a mansab was equivalent to mere grant of source of income to a person by way of recognition; it may be, of purely professional services or skill (as those of a physician or a poet).[424]

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[422] Ibid., pp. 146, 149 and also see glossary

[423] See for example David Mandelbaum, *Society in India* (Berkely,University of California 1970), M. N. Srinivas, *India : Social Structure* (Delhi,Hindustan Publishing Corporation 1982).

[424] Abdul Aziz, *The Mansabdari System and the Mughal Army*, Delhi: Idarah-i Adabiyat, 1972, p.2.

Taking further from what has been suggested by Abdul Aziz, we can possibly deduce that, firstly *mansab* was a military rank, and secondly it also served to maintain social and official hierarchies. But then the question arises that why Akbar had to introduce *mansab* system in 1574-75. A detailed analysis of the first 15 years of Akbar's reign after the ouster of Bairam Khan makes it abundantly clear that the introduction of *mansab* system in 1574-75 was shrewdly drafted stratagem of Akbar to further curtail the powers of his ambitious nobility, besides of course the grand objective of streamlining his revenue and fiscal matters.[425]

The *Turani* nobility, as discussed previously was apparently adamant on sharing the power with the sovereign, perhaps owing to the Central Asian heritage. The system of sharing war spoils and booty for a rapidly moving army might have been just fine. However, in order to annex an area/territory/region, the conquered land has to be assigned not only to impose the dictates of central authority but also to extract revenues necessary for maintaing a ready army as well as fill the royal exchequer. In the section on *mansabdars*, Abu'l Fazl clearly points towards this necessity. He writes, "But as the strength of one man is scarecely adequate to such an ardous undertaking, he selects, guided by the ight of his knowledge, some excellent men to help him, appointing at the same time servants for them."[426]

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[425] Most of the studies done on *mansabdari* system have been from the economic point of view. See, for example, Irfan Habib, W.H.Moreland.

[426] Abul Fazl, *Ain-i Akbari*, pp.247-248.

There are numerous evidences that both, Babur and Humayun assigned conquered territories to his nobles, as been discussed previously at appropriate places. Their purpose was two fold: First, to maintain regular administration and to quell any pockets of resistance, and second, individual assignments (*jagirs*). The first was usually a military assignment of a military zone headed by *hakim*, while the second was a revenue assignment of a *sarkar* (province) or a *pargana* under a particular military zone. According to I.AKhan, the vagueness in the roles, authorities and jurisdictions of the nobles of these two kinds of assignments often ensued tussle, and thus, it necessitated the introduction of *mansab* system.[427]

There were other problems with the existing system too. I.A Khan has shown conclusively that during Akbar's early years most of the assignments were concentrated in the hands of *Turani* nobility, and to still make the matter worst, these were in the same region. The cumulative result of all these, owing to the haughtiness of the *Turani* nobility was the building of strong local roots so as to often challenge the central authority, the weakening of army due to non-maintenance of stipulated army contingents and weapons, and lastly corruption and hardship. According to Badauni, *mansabdars* indulged in luxury and extravagance and were more intent on amassing wealth than on equipping their contingents or considering the welfare of the peasantry. The result was that efficient soldiery was non-existant.[428]

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[427] I.A.Khan, "The Mughal Assignment System during Akbar's Early Years, 1556-1575", *PIHC*,
[428] Baduni, 2, p.190.

As a first step towards curtailing the powers of nobility, Akbar had already started to disperse the *jagirs* of one family to different places to break their power and neutralise their local roots. The dispersal of Atka *khail* in 1568 is just one example. In the second step, Akbar made it obligatory on every noble to maintain a fixed contingent of horses from his assignment, besides withdrawing not only his own salary but also the share of royal exchequer. Thus, every noble was assigned a rank denoting not only his social status but also his personal salary (*zat*), as well as the required contingent (*swar*). This was the *mansab* system. Abu'l Fazl informs us that 66 grades were fixed from 10 to 5000, over which it was reserved only for the royal princes.[429] Not going into very great detail, Abu'l Fazl sums up the *mansab* system in the following words:

> In selecting his officers, His Majesty is assisted by his knowledge of the spirit of the age, a knowledge which sheds a peculiar light on the jewel of his wisdom. His majesty sees through some men at the first glance and confers upon them high rank. Sometimes he increases the mansab of a servant, but decreases his contingent. He also fixes the number of the beasts of burden. The monthly grants made to the mansabdars vary according to the condition of their contingents. An officer whose contingent comes upto his mansab, is put into the first class of his rank; if his contingent is one half and upwards of the fixed number, he is put into the second

[429] In actual there were only 33 grades.

> class; the third class contains those contingents which are still less.[430]

To still break the back bone of the *Turani* nobility, Akbar did further two things. He started to assign more and more *mansabs* to the non-*Turanis*, and to ensure that *mansabdars* do not cheat on the number of the horses to be maintained, Akbar also introduced the *dagh* (branding) system, whereby the so called mandatory 'beasts of burdens' were marked with unique signs so as to prevent the common practice of borrowing other noble's horses on the required day.

Through these systems, Akbar was able to counter check and nullifies the insinuations of Central Asian customs, manifested mainly in *tura*, which were making the *Turani* nobility to believe that they have a share in royal power. By reserving the highest grades of over 5000 for the princes of royal blood, Akbar also sent a message across that royalty and sovereignty cannot be shared, and thus, must have further strengthened the position of his family as the only legitimate claimant to the Mughal throne.

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[430] Abul Fazl, *Ain-i Akbari*, p.248.

5.4 Symbolism, Submission and Elevation of the Position of 'Sovereign'

Akbar is rightly regarded as the real founder of the Mughal Empire in South Asia. The policies he formulated and executed enabled him to safeguard his throne and empire from the vested interest of many groups. Almost all his policies started after the termination of the regency of Bairam Khanin 1560.

An interesting episode after the death of Bairam Khan confirms the hypothesis that through many symbolic acts Akbar was trying to elevate the position of 'sovereign'. This was Akbar's marriage with the widow of Bairam Khan.

According to Ruby Lal, Akbar married the widow of Bairam Khan to prove his commitment and loyalty to all those who were close to the Mughal court.[431] The circumstances leading to the ouster and later murder of Bairam Khan however do not support the hypothesis of Ruby Lal. The ouster of Bairam Khan was not easy, as Bairam Khan by 1560, had acquired a lot power, and was also supported by the powerful Uzbek nobility.[432] And it may also be mentioned that Akbar was cautious while gradually assuming sovereignty. His moves would eventually decide his fate, and any move against Bairam Khan was no less than a battle. Even

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[431] Lal, *Domesticity and power in the early Mughal world.*, p. 169

[432] Iqtidar Alam Khan, *The Political Biography of a mughal Noble: Munim Khan Khan-i Khanan, 1497-1575* (New Delhi,Orient Longman 1973)., pp. 57-58

when Akbar assumed sovereignty and Bairam Khan was still alive there were apprehensions in the emperor's mind of a *coup*. The murder of Bairam Khan marked the final victory of Akbar, and, his marriage with Bairam Khan's widow was a symbolic act to show his complete victory and 'sovereign' status.

The capture of an enemy's women, whether mother, wives, concubines or, for that matter, even slaves was a dominant symbol of conquest in those days. And, a woman's suicide, *jauhar* in case of Rajputs to avoid captivity, robbed the victor of victory. Thus, it was very important for the victor to capture the women of the loser, as women were perceived the carriers (rather then generators) of the reputation and status of their father/husband or sons, which could then be transmitted to the male who possessed them. This symbolic act was manifested in pre-modern Greece, as well as, in South Asia. Elizabeth Carney observes-

> Sexual possession of these bearers of status (women), whether legitimated by marriage or not, was a particularly powerful symbol of victory—a kind of second victory, both sexual and military, over the males to whom the women had belonged.[433]

Thus, the marriage of Akbar with the widow of Bairam Khan was more than the former's commitment to help and be loyal to all those who were close to the Mughal court, as is concluded by Ruby Lal.

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[433] Elizabeth Donnelly Carney, "Alexander and Persian Women," *The American Journal of Philology* 117 (1996)., p. 564

The second symbolic act of Akbar was to recruit personal disciples called *chilas*. John F. Richards, in his outstanding work had pointed out that Akbar had to elevate his position to that of the vice-regent of God to execute the authority. One of the ways was to recruit *chilas* (disciples or personal followers).[434] Furthermore, he elevated the status of the monarch to the high pedestal of vice-regent of God on earth. Additionally, Akbar introduced a system of personal discipleship whereby any one can become a personal follower of the emperor. These disciples, called *chilas,* had direct access to the emperor; the latter, as if a personification of the God, showed himself to the public every-day through the introduction of a practice called *jharokha darshan.*

The credit of establishing the practice of *jharokha darshan*, according to Abul fazl goes to Akbar.[435] Abul Fazl writes:

> After performing his morning devotions, he is visible from outside the awning, to people of all ranks, whether they be given to worldly pursuits, or to a life of solitary contemplation, without any molestation from the mace-bearers. This mode of showing himself is called, in the language of the country, *darsan* (view); and it frequently happens that business is transacted at this time. The second time of his being visible is in the State Hall, whither he generally goes after the first watch of the day. But this assembly is sometimes announced towards the

[434] See Richards, ed., *Kingship and Authority in South Asia.*
[435] *Ain-i Akbari,* p.155

> close of day, or at night. He also frequently appears at a window, which often opens into the State Hall, for the transaction of business.....[436]

It became an established tradition of the empire, and those who believed in it assembled every morning at dawn at the foot of the *jharokha* (window). According to Badauni, "low people who could not get into the *Daulat Khana* flocked together below the *jharokha* at sunrise. Unless they saw the "sacred face" they regarded food and drink prohibited to them."[437] Akbar appeared at the *jharokha*, and after giving the *darshan* (audience) held an open court in which Hindus and Muslims, high and low, men and women; all were allowed to present petitions and represent their cases in person, and the King gave 'justice' in these cases on the spot.[438] Slowly and gradually, the position of emperor shifted from top to the centre, whereby all subjects had the access to the emperor.

Akbar, by allegedly starting a new religion 'Din-i Ilahi,' was attempting to gain temporal power and personal following among his subjects. Although it appears that, the move to introduce a new religion failed miserably, it led to the introduction of the new feature in the Mughal monarchy of the recruitment of *chilas* (disciples) of the emperor. The practice further strengthened the credibility

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[436] Ain
[437] *Badauni*, vol.2, p.236
[438] Ibn Hasan, "*Central structure of the Mughal Empire*" (Lahore: Oxford University Press, 1967), p.68

of the Mughal emperor among the nobility and the masses, and he grew closer to his subjects. For the subjects, the emperor was becoming a sort of a role model, an icon of perfection, the vice-regent of God on earth, who should be imitated in every sphere of life to attain material and temporal goals.

Through these symbolic acts, Akbar built upon his personal appeal to establish an image or metaphor of the emperor's person as an embodiment of the empire. To challenge or destroy the emperor's person was to challenge or destroy the imperial system, for they were identical.[439] By the first half of the seventeenth century, the system was firmly rooted in the Mughal Empire. There are repeated references to the king recruiting disciples from every corner of the empire. The purpose of these disciples was to imitate the emperor and his habits in minute detail. Although Aurangzeb forbade the practice of *Jharokha Darshan,* he continued to enrol the *chilas* in his service.

This new phenomenon in the Mughal system yielded a new position to the emperor and if the changes are studied in context with cosmological concepts, it reveals a startling difference. The Mughal Emperor was now at the centre of administration. He was a core, with different sections of the subjects being the periphery (See appendix). Whereas, on one hand, the emperor was accessible from

[439] J.F.Richards, The Formulation of Imperial Authority under Akbar and Jahangir, in Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subramaniyam ed. "*The Mughal State 1526-1750*" (Calcutta: Oxford University Press, 1998), p.128

the centre to all his subjects, on the other hand, he was standing in the centre, like a Sun whose radiance affected the whole empire.

Yet another symbolic act to create his own independent identity and to cut-off the Central Asian roots and heritage was manifested in the attempt of Akbar to promote and patronise the Chishi Sufi *tarikh* instead of Naqshbandi *tarikh*, which for a long time was patronised by the Timurids. The Naqshbandi silsilah is an offshoot of the silsilah-i Khwajagan which was organised in Turkistan by Khwaja Ahmad 'Ata Yasvi (d: 1166) whom the Turks respectfully refer to as *Hazrat-i Turkistan*. In the fourteenth century Khwaja Bahauddin Naqsbandi (d: 1389), a spiritual descendant of Khwaja Ata revitalised the *silsilah*, and his impact was so phenomenal that the *silsilah* became identified with his name.

The Timurids were the stern follower of the Naqshbandi silsilah. Timur himself built the tomb of Khwaja 'Ata and paid respectful visits to his shrine. His descendants married into the saint's family. Mirza Haider Dughlat had described in detail how the Timurid Princes used to receive Khwaja Ubaidullah Ahrar, a spiritual descendant of Khwaja Naqshband, "standing at a distance with their eyes fixes on the ground". Babur's father was himself a disciple of Khwaja Ahrar.

However, after 1560 it is noteworthy that Akbar started to patronise the *Chishti silsilah.* The *Chishti silsilah* was basically an Indian *sufi* order with few or no ties to either Afghanistan or Central Asia. Hence there was no question of split loyalties. Through this, Akbar was able to portray himself as the monarch of India with local ties and was also able to severe off at least emotional heritage with

Central Asia. Thus, Akbar started to make frequent visits to the shrine of Khwaja Moinuddin Chisti at Ajmer. What is equally interesting is to note that Akbar's favourable attitude towards the chishtis started at a time when Mirza Hakim was continuously challenging his authority. The assassination attempt on the life of Akbar outside the shrine of Nizamuddin Auliya in 1564 by Mirza Sharfuddin, a disgruntled Naqshbandi noble might have convinced Akbar to opt for the Chistis. Thus, in 1569 Akbar undertook a dramatic step of ordering the construction of a new Imperial capital near the formerly sleepy village of Sikri. It was named 'Fatehpur' (abode of victory). Over the next fifteen years, Fatehpur would become synonymous with Akbar's power; the religious and political 'legitimacy' of his three sons who were born in Sikri between1569-1572.

It is interesting to note that after the demise of Mirza Hakim, Akbar totally abandoned the exclusive favour given to the Chishtis so far. Thus after having undertaken almost annual pilgrimages to the great Chishti shrines in Punjab, Ajmer or Delhi between the early 1560s and early1580s, Akbar never undertook another pilgrimage between 1581 and his death twenty four years later in 1605. Similarly his interest in Fatehpur Sikri also ended abruptly and he ordered imperial court's departure for the Punjab after Mirza Hakim's death in 1585. The city was abandoned. Apparently the Naqshbandis again found favour with the Mughals. A distinguished Chishti saint of the seventeenth and eighteenth century wrote as follows to one of his disciple who was trying in vain to influence the religious outlook of Aurangzeb (*Badshah Hindustan az aulad amir Timur ast was amir timur iradat be khidmat Shah Naqshband dashat*).

5.5 The Evolution of the Concept of Strong Monarchy

The received image of Akbar as the one who gave Mughal Empire a concept of centralisation and strong monarchy owes a great deal to his mentor, companion and historian Abul Fazl. Through his works *Akbarnama* and its bulky and detailed appendix *Ain-i Akbari*, Abul Fazl projected Akbar as divinely figure and introduced, rather re-introduced the ancient but strong concept of Persian Kingship. Both through practical actions as well as theoretical input from Abul Fazl Akbar was able to revive the concept of strong monarchy that helped him not only to rule for nearly half a century but also to sustain that rule by his progeny for another century. In doing so his legitimacy to rule on the basis of his ancestry not only from Timur but also from Alanqua, the legendry mother of all the Mongols was highlighted.

Like Babur, Akbar from early in his reign used a seal, especially in revenue-grant documents, where, on the rim of the circle, his genealogy was traced back to Timur, and Irfan Habib have collected enough evidences to the effect.[440] It was Arif Qandhari who also did not hesitate to ascribe to Akbar the title *Sahib-i Qiran* reserved especially for Timur.[441] Abul Fazl goes a step further and compares the horoscope of Akbar with Timur, the latter offering a scale of comparison whereby it was asserted that it indicated higher achievement than did Timur. A chapter in *Akbarnama* was therefore suitably devoted to the achievements of Timur,

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[440] Irfan Habib, 'Timur in the political tradition and historiography of Mughal India" (paper presented at the International colloquium on The Timurids and their successors, Tashkent (Uzbekistan), 1996).
[441] Ibid.

providing a short though careful chronicle apparently based on Yazdi.[442] An ambitious project *Tarikh-i Khan,dan-i Timuria* was also commissioned whereby not only the deeds of Timur, Babur and Humayun were highlighted in words but also were painted. *While* stressing on the genealogical connections in an attempt to elevate the status and position of Akbar, Abul Fazl trace his ancestry back to the legendry Alanqua, the mother of the Imperial Mongols.[443] And if the ancestry is so high then the attempt to portray Akbar as a perfect man and a monarch (*Insan-i kamil*) was obvious.

It is interesting to note that Abul Fazl had in his mind some concept of monarchy, which naturally floated in his writings. This concept perceives emperor as central and absolute to the dominion and people. Abul Fazl uses the imagery, even the terminology of the *Ishraq* tradition, when he puts temporal sovereignty at the highest station in the hierarchy of objects receiving spiritual light:

> To the Unique Almighty there is no higher station than that of the *Padshah*.........Royalty is a light from the Inimitable Almighty and a ray from the world-illuminating Sun, the essence of the books of perfection, the assemblage of excellences. In the language of the day it is called *farr-i izadi* (divine light).[444]

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[442] Fazl, *Akbarnamah*, vol.1, pp.77-81
[443] Ibid., p.122
[444] *Ain*, vol.1, p.2

The concept of monarchs as receipt of divine light or radiance is a well known ancient Sassanian tradition and concept, which provided absolute authority to the Sassanian Kings and elevated their status and position above every one else, and apparently Abul Fazl also was reverting to that concept through which Akbar's position could be strengthened. The *farr* was conceived as a blessing bestowed from above, usually by Asi, the goddess of wealth and recompense. Originally it appears to have meant the good things given to mortals by the gods, but the concept was also hypostasized as a deity. As a divine gift, it accompanied men and women favoured by the gods and it afforded them power and prosperity. The *zamayad Yasht*, although dedicated to the earth, in fact celebrates the *farr* as possessed by gods, prophets, and great heroes of Iranian myth and legend.

The *farr* is one of the most enduring concepts of Iranian tradition and figures prominently in the national history. No King could rule successfully without it. It was only by virtue of *farr* that the mighty achieved fame and glory. Its presence brought success and symbolised 'legitimacy'. Its absence changed men's fortune, indicating divine disfavour and often auguring imminent fall or defeat.

It appears that Abul Fazl by portraying Akbar as the recipient of this *farr* or divine favour was not only emphasising the model of Iranian/Sassanian Kingship but was also trying to provide him divine 'legitimacy' to rule instead of 'legitimacy' by being the progeny of Timur and Chinggis. This was perhaps the safest and the strongest way whereby Akbar could pose himself not only above the nobles but also above all mankind.

From 1556-1575 Akbar undertook various strategies to counter check the problem faced by the nobles and also planned meticulously to elevate his position as 'sovereign'. Naturally, Abul Fazl was central to all these and his written documentation of the deeds and sayings of Akbar projected him as a divine being. Ties with Central Asia were limited, if not severed. So was the case with the Islamic tradition and practice. There are few references whereby Akbar exhibited some connection with the *Yasa* and these were no less than political strategies themselves. Instead what was attempted by him was to revert back to the Persian concept of sovereignty which provided, or deem to provide strong centralisation and absolute power to the king.

Through a series of policies and symbolic acts Akbar blocked the 'dangerous' insinuations of the Central Asian traditions by carefully checking the ambitions of his nobles. He also made the Mughal 'sovereign' a centre of all political social and religious affairs and elevated his position among the nobility and the masses to that of the vice regent of God. The strong new position of the 'sovereign' depended obviously on the personal strength of the emperor. Due to his personal strength, Akbar ensured that his administration worked efficiently, and no hindrances are encountered from the nobility.

Ernst H. Kantorowicz brilliantly demonstrated that the King possess two bodies. One is his natural body, which is just like the body of any other man, subject to all

sorts of needs and temptations. The other is his political body, which is above all other human beings, who is not only incapable of doing wrong but even of thinking wrong.[445] According to Edmund Plowden, whose *Reports* were collected and written under Queen Elizabeth wrote, "that by the common law no Act which the King does as King, shall be defeated by his Non age. For the King has in him two Bodies, viz., a Body natural, and a Body politic. His Body natural (if it be considered in itself) is a Body mortal, subject to all Infirmities that come by Nature or Accident, to the Imbecility of Infancy or old Age, and to like Defects that happen to the natural Bodies of other people. But his Body politic is a Body that cannot be seen or handled, consisting of policy and Government, and constituted for the Direction of the people, and the Management of the public weal, and this Body is utterly void of Infancy, and old Age, and other Natural Defects and Imbecilities, which the Body natural is subject to, and for this cause, what the King does in his Body politic, cannot be invalidated or frustrated by any Disability in his natural Body."[446]

The analysis of Akbar actually cries for a nod in the direction of Kantorowicz's thesis. It demonstrates that a king is also subject to pressures and insinuations as any other man is. He has a family himself consisting of many relatives including wives and children and sometimes he has to show consideration to them as well.

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[445] See Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The king's two bodies: a study in medieval political theology* (Princeton: Princeton University press, 1957)

[446] Cited from Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (Princeton: Princeton University press, 1957) p.7

He has a personal life as well, with his wives, concubines, and mistresses inside the harem. On the other hand, he is *Zillillah* (shadow of God on earth) who is devoid of doing anything wrong. The divine King, like Akbar is above all the pleasures and pain. Whatever he does in his everyday life is for the attainment of the general good of his kingdom and people. He should be obeyed. Disobedience to the King is not just 'revolt' but an act of 'sin'. With these concepts, Akbar was able to carve out not only a large Kingdom but also a large following and the success of his strategies is well illustrated from his long and nearly unchallenged authority. Even after his death in 1605 his sons and grandsons continued to hold the Kingship for another century, thereby establishing a dynastic 'legitimacy'.

CONCLUSION

The present work is a modest attempt to understand the evolution and nature of the Mughal political structure from its inception in 1526 up to 1575 when most of its administrative and political set-up and structure had evolved and were functional. The question that surrounded the entire journey from 1526-1575 while exploring the evolution of Mughal political structure rallied round the Central Asian notions and concept of sovereignty, which for some scholars hardly permitted the rise of strong centralised monarchy, and from where the Mughal traced their descent. This in part, owed to the dominance of the laws of Chinggis Khan in what is popularly referred to as the Central Asian concept of sovereignty. While on one hand the research focuses on the impact of Central Asian instituations on Mughal politics and administration, it also on the other hand explores the role of *yasa* in the Central Asian political structure. *siyasa*, the Persian key word and terminology equivalent to the English 'Politics' was used to understand the evolution of the political structure both in Central Asia and later on under Mughals.

In an attempt to understand the political structure of the Mughals, an analysis of the position of its sovereign becomes inevitable. In a monarchical set-up, especially during the medieval period, it was a sovereign who was the cornerstone of political structure and administration. His position within his territories and among his subjects clearly defined the administrative machinery and also his position among the rest of his contemporary monarchs. He enjoyed absolute powers not only over his subjects, but also over his nobles as well as other members of the ruling house.

The analysis of the reign of the founder of Mughal dynasty in Hindustan, Babur and to some extent during the early period of his son and successor Humayun demonstrates that the powers exercised by the nobility, which at that time were overwhelmingly Central Asian origin, and in a sense were 'blood relatives' of the Mughals of Hindustan hampered the growth of strong monarchy. Theoretically a sovereign's power and position is unchallenged. However, the analysis shows that the early Mughals and even their ancestors hardly enjoyed that position. Numerous princes and nobles often challenged the dictates and authority of the sovereign, not only during the reign of Babur and Humayun but also during the reign of their ancestors in Central Asia.

The rationale that the above predicament was due to the nature of the Central Asian concept of sovereignty based on the laws of Chinggis Khan appears to be oversimplified, and has been questioned in chapters I and II. Chinggis Khan who allegedly proclaimed these canons was himself sovereign enjoying absolute powers. Later, Timur also ruled as a strong ruler with absolute powers at a time when the laws of Chinggis Khan had acquired a paramount status in the Central Asian political and administrative structure. That he never claimed the title of a sovereign was due to the fact that he was not related by blood to the house of Chinggis Khan, and his matrimonial alliances with the legendry house was an attempt to obtain legitimacy to rule.

The issue of legitimacy apparently formed the core of the politics (*siyasa*) during the medieval period; especially when in Islamic system there was no known fixed law of succession. The theorists were attempting to re-define the *siyasa* to

harmonize it not only with the fast changing political situations but also with *shariat*. The meaning and practical application of *siyasa* kept on evolving as the Islamic system itself evolved, as has been discussed in the introduction of the thesis. From the mere and simplified meaning of 'management' it acquired new definitions and further additions were incorporated to it with the change in Islamic political structure.

The magnamity as well as notoriety of the Mongolian conquest under Chinggis Khan forced the issue of legitimacy to the fore front of the *siyasa*, and not surprisingly the laws of Chinggis Khan, *yasa,* were confused with *siyasa* as discussed in Chapter I. The big question about who has the legitimacy to rule, which initially was confirmed on the House of Prophet, was equally challenged by the 'House of Chinggis Khan'. The conversion of Mongols after the death of Chinggis Khan also solved the issue that anyone could claim legitimacy to rule. It is apparently by virtue of this easy access to legitimacy that numerous princes and nobles could aspire to become sovereign, which in fact they did, often at the cost of the sovereign's position. Thus, the present study offers a different explanation to the earlier findings that attempted to show the feeble nature of a sovereign in the Central Asian political system.

The early Mughals, namely Babur and Humayun faced the challenges from their nobility as well as brothers and uncles mainly due to the above reason. Babur himself claimed legitimacy to rule over Hindustan by claiming it as his ancestral property, implying his emphasis over his blood connections with the house of Timur, which also had acquired the legitimizing power. Whereby the blood

connections with the house of Timur and also maternal connection with the house of Chinggis Khan provided Babur a strong base to claim legitimacy, it also ensured the continuing of the policy where emphasis on blood connection provided easy legitimacy to the position of sovereign. The problem of nobility during the reign of Babur is quite understandable from this point of view. The attempts by Babur to introduce the concept of 'justice' as a legitimizing tool in *siyasa* too proved disastrous for the lenient attitude he had to show towards other nobles, as discussed in Chapter III. However, the nomination of his son Humayun as his successor to the throne in Hindustan does in fact point towards the fact that Babur was gradually successful in exerting his position.

Humayun, right from the beginning, did assert his authority and supremacy. During the initial ten years of his reign, Humayun not only acted independently but also, to an extent wasable to counter the principles of 'blood and legitimacy', which provided a sort of autonomy to the nobles, especially the male members of the ruling house. The conferrment of grants, titles, awards and positions to his chiefs was clearly the prerogative of a sovereign. Although these awards and gifts were not on a considerable level, yet they point towards the fact that gradually the concept of Mughal kingship was evolving, and the powers of a 'sovereign' were widening.

The administrative innovations carried out by Humayun point towards the fact that he was keen to elevate his position among the other members who claimed equal status with him. His attempts to not only reform his administrative machinery but also his status was evident from various innovative methods he devised to claim

his divine status, notably putting a veil over his face and division of nobility into three classes. By putting himself and his family in the first grade, Humayun appears to have sent the message across to his Central Asian nobility that he was not equal to them but over and above them. Through other metaphoric acts, like placing of veil on his face, Humayun distanced himself from the nobles who thought that the emperor is one amongst them. History is witness to the fact that on numerous occassions various sovereigns had to resort to this method. Balban, in the fourteenth century acted likewise when he claimed divine status to counteract the slave nobility. Balban posed himself above all, especially above the slave nobility by not exhibiting his emotions in the public, for, in order to prove his extraordinary status he had to prove that he was above all emotions.Thus, Humayun certainly had a precedence to follow. It has been argued that all of his innovations were well-crafted strategy to make the position of sovereign absolute, rather than meaningless innovations. The administrative innovations of Humayun had rather deep meanings.

By 1540, Humayun through his military conducts and other symbolic acts, did try to give shape and meaning, not only to Mughal kingship, but also to Mughal administration. It was only due to these continuous efforts by Humayun to elevate his position that he faced threats and challenges to his authority and innovations by the same nobles, resulting in the loss of territories of Hindustan in 1540. Along with the nobles the inmates of the *harem* also played prominent part in favouring or deposing a particular prince or noble. The Blood relatives too enjoyed a privileged position.

Akbar had to counter the ambitions of these different factions that had arisen primarily due to an easy access to the legitimacy. By the time of Akbar, legitimacy could also be manufactured by promises of gifts, offices and position to those who legitimized the ruler, mainly the religious class. The last chapter also notes the important position of the foster or the milk relatives that remained largely unnoticed from the modern studies, and as such were at equal footing with the blood relatives. The politics of the time was clearly steered by the legitimacy paradigm instead of or in addition to the Central Asian notions of sovereignty.

The period after the end of regency, that is from 1560 up to 1575 indicates the attempt by Akbar to counter this legitimacy principle of both milk and blood by not only elevating his position to the highest pedestal but also through administrative innovations. The tussle between different nobles to acquire the coveted position of *wakil* & *Diwan* led Akbar to denigrate the post itself by appointing people of non-*Turani* origin, and having absolutely no claim to these posts. This had two effects. Firstly, it conveyed the clear message to the haughty nobles from Central Asia that it is the prerogative of the sovereign to appoint anyone at any post. Thus, no post is a prerogative of any family or any noble with specific geographical or blood affiliations. The appointment of a eunuch Phul Malik, later styled Itimad Khan to the coveted office of *diwan,* is just one example in this direction. Secondly, by appointing persons having no claim to high post, Akbar in fact was obliging them and believed that they should remain loyal to him. Placing of one generation nobility (eunuchs) and by recruiting more non-*turani* people in his nobility, Akbar in fact successfully challenged the nobles believing in Central Asian principles.

Recruitment of Rajput women in harem and their male counterparts in the nobility, admitting personal disciples, and introducing *mansab* and *jagir* system were all aimed at controlling the powers of the nobility and elevating the position of the sovereign. To raise the position of sovereign to that of God or his shadow was not something that was totally unknown in medieval politics. The Delhi Sultan Balban or for that matter Chinggis Khan had also to elevate their position to assert their authority.

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